

APRIL-JUNE

1952

SIGHT AND SOUND



3/6

*The
Film
Quarterly*

JEAN RENOIR: Personal Notes

PENELOPE HOUSTON: Scott Fitzgerald and Hollywood

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: Extract from *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Articles and Reviews by

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This list has been compiled for us by the staff of SIGHT AND SOUND and we hope it may serve as a useful general guide to the principal films now in British cinemas

ANGELS ONE FIVE (*A.B.-Pathe*). An episode in the Battle of Britain; simple, straightforward, conventional story of a group of pilots. (Michael Denison, Dulcie Gray; director, George More O'Ferrall.)

BELLE OF NEW YORK, THE (*M.G.M.*). Musical with pleasant colour and dancing, poor songs and book. (Fred Astaire, Vera-Ellen; director Charles Walters.)

BIG TREES, THE (*Warners*). Ambition versus religion in California forests; dubious plot, meaty spectacle, some lively handling. (Kirk Douglas, Eve Miller, Patrice Wymore; director, Felix Feist.)

CARD, THE (*G.F.D.*). Alec Guinness miscast in rambling, amiable, slightly subfusc version of Arnold Bennett novel. (Glynis Johns, Valerie Hobson; director, Ronald Neame.)

CRY THE BELOVED COUNTRY (*British Lion*). Uneven, sincere, interesting adaptation of Alan Paton's novel about racial tensions in South Africa. (Canada Lee, Sidney Poitier; director, Zoltan Korda.)

DARK PAGE, THE (*Columbia*). Newspaper office thriller; nothing new. (Broderick Crawford, John Derek; director, Phil Karlson.)

DEDEE D'ANVERS (*G.C.T.*). Efficient, conventional low life French film. (Simone Signoret, Marcel Pagliero; director, Yves Allegret.)

DISTANT DRUMS (*Warners*). Gary Cooper treks through Florida swamps; predictable adventures with Indians. Authentic Technicolor locations. (Mari Aldon; director, Raoul Walsh.)

5 FINGERS (*Fox*). Intriguing spy material, with too many fictitious improbabilities and disappointingly slow treatment from Joseph Mankiewicz. (James Mason, Danielle Darrieux, Michael Rennie.)

FORT WORTH (*Warners*). Average Western; fights on the rail road in Texas. (Randolph Scott, Phyllis Thaxter; director, Edwin L. Marin.)

GARCON SAUVAGE, LE (*Regent*). Story of a prostitute and her son, monotonously directed by Delannoy, but relieved by Madeleine Robinson's performance. (Frank Villard, Pierre Michel Beck.)

GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH, THE (*Paramount*). De Mille, Technicolor, 2 circuses, 2½ hours: a field day for vulgarians. (Betty Hutton, Charlton Heston, Cornel Wilde.)

HUNTED (*G.F.D.*). Cut to pattern, capably directed man-on-the-run thriller: good locations, Dirk Bogarde excellent, 6 year-old Jon Whiteley very appealing. (Director, Charles Crichton.)

I BELIEVE IN YOU (*G.F.D.*). Two London probation officers and a cross-section of their clientele. Competent film journalese. (Cecil Parker, Celia Johnson, Harry Fowler; directors, Michael Relph and Basil Dearden.)

INSIDE THE WALLS OF FOLSOM PRISON (*Warners*). Prison-break melo; tough warders, tough convicts etc. (Steve Cochran, David Brian; director, Crane Wilbur.)

INVITATION (*M.G.M.*). Millionaire's dying daughter finds husband has, been bribed to marry her; a happy ending intervenes. Nondescript tearjerker with unrealised possibilities. (Dorothy McGuire, Van Johnson, Ruth Roman; director, Gottfried Reinhardt.)

JAPANESE WAR BRIDE (*Fox*). G.I. bride has a hard time before husband's family come round; novelettish. (Don Taylor, Shirley Yamaguchi; director King Vidor.)

MARIE DU PORT, LA (*Studio One*). 1950 Carné film about the courtship of a proud Norman girl by a middle-aged business man. Beautifully made but very slight. (Jean Gabin, Nicole Courcel.)

ON MOONLIGHT BAY (*Warners*). Small town musical set in 1917, with Doris Day as a reformed tomboy. Slight, passable. (Gordon MacRae; director, Roy Del Ruth.)

QUO VADIS (*M.G.M.*). Latest, longest and dreariest version of Sienkiewicz's much filmed novel of ancient Rome. (Robert Taylor, Deborah Kerr; director, Mervyn LeRoy.)

***RASHOMON** (*London Films*). Four conflicting versions of a murder and a rape lead to reflections on the nature of truth: exciting, powerful, unusually impressive film from Japan. (Toshiro Mifune, Machiko Kyo; director, Akira Kurosawa.)

RED SKIES OF MONTANA (*Fox*). Good (Technicolor) forest fires; familiar plot of rivalry and suspicion among the firemen. (Richard Widmark, Constance Smith, Jeffrey Hunter; director, Joseph Newman.)

ROBIN HOOD (*R.K.O.*). A Disney British production. Customary high jinks, mainly for children. (Richard Todd, Joan Rice; director, Ken Annakin.)

SATURDAY ISLAND (*R.K.O.*). Marooned Canadian nurse and brash marine, 10 years her junior romance and part on tropical Technicolor island. Experienced malarky. (Linda Darnell, Tab Hunter; director, Stuart Heisler.)

SO LITTLE TIME (*A.B.-Pathe*). Wartime weepie about doomed love of Belgian girl and German officer brought together by music. (Marius Goring, Maria Schell; director, Compton Bennett.)

STARLIFT (*Warners*). Parade of Warner's stars exhaustingly entertain Korea-bound troops. (Doris Day and guest stars; director, Roy Del Ruth.)

WHERE THE RIVER BENDS (*G.F.D.*). Big Technicolor western; spectacle better than story. (James Stewart, Arthur Kennedy; director, Anthony Mann.)

WILD NORTH, THE (*M.G.M.*). Trapper Stewart Granger versus Mounty Wendell Corey in husky adventure story; scenery, Ansco Color. (Director, Andrew Marton.)

WITH A SONG IN MY HEART (*Fox*). Technicolor life of Jane Froman, popular singer who did not let paralysis interfere with her career. Undistinguished handling and performance. (Susan Hayward; director, Walter Lang.)

(Films reviewed in this issue of SIGHT AND SOUND are not included in the Film Guide.)

Those marked with an asterisk are especially recommended.

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Contents

Features—

THE FRONT PAGE	John Grierson	143
IN THE PICTURE		144
JOAN CRAWFORD, Daughter of the American Revolution		162
IN THE SCRIPT : <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>	Tennessee Williams	173
THE LIVING STORY	Edgar Anstey, William Alwyn, Ian Dalrymple, James Beveridge, Denis Forman	176

Articles—

WHO WANTS TRUE ?	Gavin Lambert	148
PERSONAL NOTES	Jean Renoir	152
VISITS TO BABYLON : <i>Scott Fitzgerald in Hollywood</i>	Penelope Houston	153
GHOULIES AND GHOSTIES	Curtis Harrington	157
CARUSO ON THE MOVIES	Edward Ludwig	164
CHILDREN'S FILMS	Janet Hills	179

Reviews—

AN OUTCAST OF THE ISLANDS	Basil Wright	166	SHADOW IN THE SKY & BRANDY FOR THE PARSON	Gavin Lambert	171
LOS OLVIDADOS	John Maddison	167	RICHER THAN THE EARTH & THE WELL	Penelope Houston	172
SECRET PEOPLE	Gavin Lambert	168	BOOK REVIEWS	Frank Hauser, Robert Hamer, Antony Hopkins, etc.	182
VIVA ZAPATA !	Catherine de la Roche	170	THE SOUND TRACK	John Huntley	183
A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE	Karel Reisz	170	CORRESPONDENCE		184

ON THE COVER : Vivien Leigh in *A Streetcar Named Desire*

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We regret to record the death, at the age of 54, of Oliver Bell, J.P., Secretary-General of the Magistrates' Association. Mr. Bell became a director of The British Film Institute in 1936, and for thirteen years supervised its growth and development, himself taking a particular interest in visual education and children's films. In other fields his career was equally active and distinguished. After leaving University College, Oxford, he worked for the League of Nations Union and edited its magazine, *Headway*; he worked for the Conservative Central Office; he maintained an interest in the theatre, begun when he was stage manager for the O.U.D.S. and continued as chairman of the Pilgrim Players; and from 1945 onwards he devoted himself increasingly to his work as J.P. on the Wimbledon Bench. He was known and admired for his liberal sympathies and natural generosity throughout his life, and leaves behind a large and varied circle of friends.

The Front Page

Since our last issue, the most important event in British films has, perhaps, been the dissolution of the CROWN FILM UNIT. The *Front Page* is now given to JOHN GRIERSON, closely associated with British documentary and the tradition of public sponsorship since 1929, for his view of the situation.

**COME, COME,
IS IT
REALLY R.I.P.?**

I think it would be sensible not to blame the present Government overmuch for the decision about Crown. The employment problem must certainly be irritating for some of Crown's members. On the other hand, the British documentary movement, maintained principally and continuously by Whitehall for twenty-four years, has had rich opportunities of developing employment resources elsewhere. Crown, as Sir Stephen Tallents pointed out in *The Times*, is no longer the single and privileged centre of an experimental development, but merely one unit—and a good one—among others. Its old leaders and its many talents of the past have set up Crown standards elsewhere and with the blessing of other sponsorship forces.

In particular, I do not like to see the present Government blamed because to do so is to miss the point. Crown has been coming unstuck for a long time. Its work has always been fine and it is right that we should honour its good taste to the last. But, as we all know, its singular uniqueness as a unit has gone. For me, Crown—the best of Crown—is more or less everywhere.

There have been mistakes. Beaconsfield was one. The building up of large vested interests in the technical departments was another. The bureaucratic overhead came, like a tail the size of a kangaroo's, to wag the poor benighted hound. It represented a shocker in civil service misconception of duties and limitations. We committed the traditional sin in film making: "pinched the money off the screen." The illusion that techniques, vital as they are, provide the secret of creative work was a deeper error still.

On top of all this came the terms of reference of the C.O.I., laid down not by a Conservative government but by a Socialist one. You cannot, of course, attack civil servants for terms of reference politically established, but let us realise what in the upshot they meant. They meant that the Departments were in command, commanding as best they could; and it was as dreary a business of the halt leading the blind as I shall ever encounter. They meant above all that the privilege of making imaginative films for Britain was removed and the staid particulars of departmental interest took over. I have quoted Goebbels before on the subject and do so again, for he had his own *cri de coeur*. "In the day to day pedestrian pursuit of departmental interests, the national interest is forgotten."

If you would like another quotation, ponder this one from Lord Beveridge: "Just from where in our classless collection of men and women the leadership will come to make us a society with a sense of unity in service to the world, I do not know . . . We have somehow to carry on the aristocratic tradition without the aristocrats." Let me as an old radical say it with sorrow. The Socialist government was so busy denying the aristocratic tradition as well as the wretches on the tumbrel, that they had no responsible, far less enlightened, appreciation of the sort of thing Crown represented. The best stuff at Crown, the stuff that made its reputation and will always be its pride, came under the inspired sponsorship of Tory ministers who, for some crazy reason, were quite happy to see Crown making poetry about the Nation. They even let us get away with the future in introducing the visage of the working people—not unfatefully—to the Nation's screens! All this new instructional and hortatory stuff is no equivalent, defend it as we please. The honours of that particular development belong, and a long time ago, to G.B.I., Realist and Shell.

What makes us all unanimous today isn't Crown's creative achievement in the recent period because—the blessed Colonial Office sponsorship apart—it has been given no chances except along lines which other units had already distinguished. It isn't because of its present creative talents for we can all count them on our fingers and know that they have little—except in frustration—to do with the present establishment. Moreover, they will find their place soon elsewhere.

No, what we are really unanimous about is that Crown was a wonderful place for all of us at one time or another. We know too why it was wonderful. It was so because here was a place free from vested and selfish interest, in which we could serve our country and our time in one or two of the most creative categories of film making. When that privilege was taken from Crown—and finally buried ignominiously in the ditch with the elimination of "Own Right" films—Crown's true reason for a unique existence had departed.

What comes next is, I think, simple enough to deduce. Let us save the principle; and here I do not mean saving the rump or nexus or whatever it was Arthur Elton and Stephen Tallents "modestly" recommended in *The Times*. The rump or nexus to do what? The same old instructional or hortatory thing in the statutory company of the C.O.I. and the poor Departments vetting all pleasure out of movie? Stone the crows, it would be the same old gumtree.

The principle is surely yet again that:

(a) We should devote some public money every year to making film poetry about Britain.

(b) The only—and traditionally English—guarantee of this is to put the policy job—I mean the sponsorship—in the hands of two or three imaginatively generous people who have the wit to know what that means.

I see nothing in Government policy or in Treasury tradition or goodwill to prevent my simple and competitively "modest" solution.

(1) Let us create an organisation under the sponsorship I have noted, with an intelligent leader who cares more for poetry than about having a job.

(2) Give him a secretary and an accountant with a secretary and let the four of them shoo every phoney "administrative expert" out of sight.

(3) Let them proceed with the lightest possible pack on their backs to secure the making of at least half a dozen documentary films a year in the best tradition.

(4) Let the good established units under this aegis make one or two apiece, choosing for directors not their old stagers but the topmost talent they can find.

(5) Let the organisation start with a Circuit tie-up, for surely it could be managed if the ideas were bright.

(6) Money? Let the Treasury through the N.F.F.C.,

match outside money fifty-fifty up to twenty-five or thirty thousand pounds as a beginning.

(7) Let the seniors amongst us find that outside money on the strength of such records as we may have; and let the younger people, if they have it in them, have the fullest advantage of it. What we did successfully—and commercially so—with the films of Scotland Committee, we ought, with our greater experience now, to be able to do again.

(8) Call them the Crown Series and keep the name for possible future eventualities, such as Whitehall must consider. It will give you your nexus alright—not of vested interests, but of demonstrable service to the imagination of the people.

JOHN GRIERSON



Maureen O'Hara and John Wayne in a location from John Ford's new film, "The Quiet Man", about a farmer in Ireland, much of it shot in Galway

Gregory La Cava

A director of slight but distinctive talent, Gregory La Cava died aged 59 in California in March. He had an erratic commercial career. He entered films in the early 20's and first worked in cartoons; a few years later he was making feature like *Woman-handled* and *So's Your Old Man*. In the 30's his personality emerged with a satirical fantasy, *Gabriel over the White House*, a crazy comedy, *My Man Godfrey*, and successes like *Private Worlds* and *Stage Door*. Later, *The Primrose Path*, with Ginger Rogers, was an interesting film: *Unfinished Business* had sporadic charm; and *Living in a Big Way* (1947), with Gene Kelly, some unusually attractive dance sequences. Recently he had been inactive, due in part perhaps to his habit of shooting "off the cuff" without a final script and insisting on improvisation on the floor. He was the only director to whom W. C. Fields would listen, and gave him much valuable advice. La Cava's best films had a gift of light and intimate comedy and pleasantly relaxed, natural feeling.



IN THE PICTURE

The Telecinema and the New Gallery

Two London cinemas are in the news. The future of the **Telecinema**, one of the major successes of the Festival of Britain, has now been decided. A special grant from Sir Wilfrid Eady's British Film Production Fund will enable it to be run by the British Film Institute. After the structural alterations necessary to convert it from a temporary to a permanent building, the Telecinema will open towards the end of 1952 as the centre of a new and expanded series of film programmes. Among the regular features will be experimental films, and a repertory season of classics. Further details will be announced later.

Latest and particularly significant addition to the list of London's specialist cinemas is the **New Gallery** in Regent Street, which opened early in 1952 under the directorship of Sir George Franckenstein, Lord Donegall and James Wilson. This capacious cinema has had a chequered history since it opened in 1913 as a theatre; now, as by far the largest of continental houses in London, with an enterprising policy of showing new films at reduced popular prices, it looks like acquiring the personality that in the past has eluded it. Its new directors, whose company is called Regent Films, have already presented an Italian melodrama, *La Citta si Difende*, and two Jean Delannoy films, *Dieu a Besoin des Hommes* and *Le Garçon Sauvage*. Popular response, it seems, has been good. One looks forward to future programmes, and attendances, with interest.

Pommer in Germany

Our German correspondent, GERD TREUHAFT, writes: During a short trip through Germany I made an excursion to Geiseltasteig, outside Munich, where I learned that a "German" had come back to Germany. The 63-year-old **Eric Pommer** is a victim of political circumstances, which have forced him from emigration to re-emigration. This doesn't mean that Mr. Pommer had to return to Germany to earn his livelihood as a producer, but it was like the semi-conscious voice that persuaded well-known emigrants to start life again where it was once forcibly interrupted. Now these people are back in Germany—Fritz Kortner, Anton Walbrook, Albert Lieven, Lucie Mannheim, and Eric Pommer.

When I entered Eric Pommer's room in Geiseltasteig, however, I knew immediately that this man wasn't searching for the past; he has no ambition to see his name in big red letters outside the Marmorhaus in Berlin again. Pommer began producing films in Vienna in 1919, and when his company became associated with U.F.A., his own productions included *The Last Laugh* and *Faust* (Murnau), *Variety* (Dupont), *Metropolis* (Lang) and *Cinderella* (Berger). His personal biography relates that in 1924 he was elected President of the German Film Organisation; two years later he left U.F.A. to join Paramount and then M.G.M. in Hollywood. He didn't stay long, and by 1928 was back with U.F.A. to produce *The Blue Angel* (von Sternberg), *Congress Dances* (Charrell) and many others. He stayed there until Hitler's rise to power, then in 1933 accepted an offer from Twentieth Century-Fox to produce *Liliom* in Paris, which Fritz Lang directed.

A brief visit again to Hollywood, then to England: in 1937 he formed Mayflower Pictures with Charles Laughton and John Maxwell, which produced *The Vessel of Wrath* and *Jamaica Inn*. With the outbreak of the second world war he returned to Hollywood, and in 1946 returned to Germany as a films officer and adviser to the American occupation authorities. For two years he worked in that capacity, before returning to Hollywood again.

"Now here I am again," said the elderly gentleman in front of me, noticing I had finished reading his biography. He spoke in English but, out of consideration to his press officer, I suggested conducting the conversation in German.

"Why have you come back to Germany this time?" I asked him, knowing in advance that I would get only half a reply.

"To make a film called *Nachts auf den Strauss*", he said, "which may be shown in England, and called *Detour*."

Margaret Rutherford as Miss Prism and Dorothy Tutin as Cecily in Anthony Asquith's new Technicolor film of "The Importance of Being Earnest"

People who have lived, worked and achieved success over forty years in one country don't adapt themselves to a new "Heimat", specially when they have been born there; it is a sentimental streak that brings them back. I didn't expect Pommer to explain this. So I asked him what he thought about German films. "Do you think German films will make a comeback on the international market?"

Pommer looked tired and overworked, and much older than his 63 years. He seemed to make an effort to answer. "German films are still standing on a very weak foundation. . . . There are too many people in the trade who know nothing about films, who don't care about quality or scripts or actors as long as they can produce a film quickly and profitably. All the same, I believe German films will come up again—slowly and painfully, because the competition, as you know, is great."

"Would you say that German actors, producers, cameramen and technicians work better and harder than in England or Hollywood?"

"I don't want to generalise too much," he said, lighting a cigarette, "but I think I can say they do work harder. The shooting day is shorter, and German film companies have to economise, which means a film must come off the floor as quickly as possible. If you want to judge for yourself, my press officer will show you around."

This looked like a polite way of ending our conversation, but the press officer assured me Mr. Pommer didn't mean it that way. Anyhow, for twenty minutes I watched a scene being shot for *Detour*, and it seemed to me that in Geiselgasteig they worked unusually fast. No cups of tea being served at 3 o'clock, and, unsurprisingly, I learned that most of the technicians were ex-U.F.A. people, known for their Prussian organisation and efficiency. There seemed, too, to be fewer people standing around and watching progress than I have found in British studios.

As I left, Pommer appeared. He asked quietly: "All right?" I nodded yes. Germany's star producer seemed pleased—the film was then right up to schedule. The press officer remarked that they have day and night shooting in Geiselgasteig, and the boss is usually present. It seemed hard work for the 63-year-old Pommer, but with *Detour*—which has a distinguished cast including Hans Albers, Hildegard Knef, Marius Goring and Lucie Mannheim—he evidently hopes to bring German films back to an international level.

Spanish Bernadette

A correspondent recently returned from Spain, A. J. BIDDULPH, writes: The Spanish cinema has at last given signs of approaching maturity, with a film directed by Rafael Gil (whose *Don Quixote* was shown in London) called *La Senora di Fatima*.

Like the rest of Western Europe, Spain has largely succumbed to the fruits of the Hollywood production line. In spite of a growing policy of protection, which rules among other things that all films shown in Spain must have a Spanish sound track (a rule relaxed only for Donald Duck), in a recent normal week fifty-two out of Madrid's eighty-one cinemas were showing American productions.

La Senora di Fatima, then, comes as something of a surprise. A Lourdes-Bernadette type of story, it is set in the revolution-ridden Portugal of 1917, and recounts how in the wretched village of Fatima a young girl, Lucia (played by an Italian actress, Ines Orsini), and her two friends, have a vision of the Madonna while tending sheep on the hillside.

The story is ready-made, and for Spanish audiences has a ready-made appeal. Perhaps because of this, there is no self-conscious effort to convince, and the solemnity is lightened by touches of humour, which at times seems, to the uninformed, positively sacrilegious. In general Rafael Gil has directed with confidence, though the final scenes are impeded by a sub-plot; his handling of the actual vision scenes varied, beginning well, but ending dubiously.

The camera work of the Franco-Russian Michel Kelber (who photographed *Le Diable au Corps*) comes as a refreshing influence into the Spanish film. Whether due to over-exuberant use of filters, poor stock or simply bad camera work, most exterior scenes in Spanish films appear to have been shot last thing on a foggy evening. Here we had a startling contrast, with velvet blacks, clear whites and greys, and sharp images. The three children are the leading players, supported by a cast which includes many names outstanding in the Spanish cinema.

Ingrid Bergman and Alexander Knox in Rossellini's "Europe 1952"



The designer (Joseph Tomelty) about to test the model of his new swept-wing fighter, "Prometheus", in David Lean's new film, "The Sound Barrier", written by Terence Rattigan. Players include Ralph Richardson, Ann Todd and Nigel Patrick

Postscript: a dubbed American version of *Fatima* is now being released in the States, and Warner Brothers announce their own remake of the subject.

The Devil's Weed

A recent minor phenomenon is the case of *The Devil's Weed*. Featuring Lila Leeds, who was prosecuted with Robert Mitchum in a narcotics case a few years ago, the film purports to tell the story of the dope addiction and cure of a showgirl. This lurid confession magazine affair was refused a certificate by the British Board of Film Censors and has been banned by licensing authorities in the South of England, including the L.C.C., Surrey and Essex County Councils and Bristol, where the Chief Constable commented: "there has been no case of marijuana smoking in Bristol, and it is not thought wise to suggest it." In the Northern counties, however, customers are apparently tougher and local authorities milder; with whatever effects, the film (heavily cut) is said to be doing a roaring business.





National Film Finance Corporation

On the last day of the last Parliament Sir Hartley Shawcross, then President of the Board of Trade, stated that the Government intended to increase the resources of the N.F.F.C. by another £2 million, so meeting the need for additional funds envisaged in the Corporation's Second Annual Report. Doubts as to whether the new Administration would decide to carry out its predecessor's promise were answered in February, when Mr. Peter Thorneycroft announced that the extra £2 million would be forthcoming. He pointed out that the work of the N.F.F.C., together with the Eady Fund, had "undoubtedly caused an appreciable improvement in the industry's prospects", but that progress "needs to be consolidated, and for this purpose the Corporation may need some further capital."

Some speculation has been aroused as to the probable source of the extra capital, for the Bill (introduced in the House of Lords on February 22nd) states that up to £2 million may be borrowed from non-Government sources. In the event, there should be no great problem involved. Previous legislation had laid down that when the Corporation is dissolved, as it may be by order any time after March 8th, 1954, the Government will accept any remaining liabilities. The new loan will in effect, therefore, be backed by Treasury guarantee.



Three scenes from Stanley Kramer's production of "Death of a Salesman", by Arthur Miller. Above: Mildred Dunnock as the wife, at the salesman's funeral. Top left: Fredric March as the salesman—the moment of reunion with his son Biff (Kevin McCarthy). Below: the two sons, Happy (Cameron Mitchell) and Biff. The director is Laszlo Benedek

Bill of Divorcement

The U.S. Government's 14-year old Anti-Trust suit involving the "Big Five" Hollywood companies, whose progress was reported by Ernest Borneman in *SIGHT AND SOUND* early last year, came to an end in February. The last Consent Decree, that with Loew's Inc. (M.G.M.) was approved by the Federal Court and, like Paramount, Warners, R.K.O. and 20th Century Fox, the other defendants in the suit, the company was given two years to put its terms into effect. These terms chiefly concern divorce—the separation of production and distribution from exhibition—and divestiture—the selling of certain theatres to provide for more competitive conditions of exhibition. Divorcement involves the setting up of separate theatre companies; at the time of the Fox Consent Decree the *Motion Picture Herald* reported, "it is noteworthy that the decree does not prevent Spyros P. Skouras from continuing as head of the picture company and Charles P. Skouras as head of the theatre company." Divestiture will result in the sale of about 1,200 theatres to independent exhibitors, while the remaining 1,300 of the 2,500 now owned by the Big Five will be operated by the new theatre companies.

Seven Deadly Sins

Our Paris correspondent, FRANCIS KOVAL, writes: Franco-Italian co-productions have not in the past (with one or two notable exceptions) achieved films of outstanding quality. A new one, however, is arousing much comment because of its intriguing subject and its impressive array of directors and stars.

Les Sept Péchés Capitaux (*The Seven Deadly Sins*) is a film of seven sketches, Rossellini brings *l'Envie* to the screen, adapting Colette's *La Chatte* for the purpose, with Andrée Debar (French) and Orfeo Tamburi (Italian). Claude Autant-Lara is shooting *l'Orgueil* (*Pride*), with Francoise Rosay and Michèle Morgan. *La Luxure* (*Lechery*) stars Viviane Romance and Frank Villard, directed by Yves Allegret; Noel-Noel plays St. Peter in *La Paresse* (*Laziness*), with Jean Dréville as director. The Italian Eduardo de Filippo is responsible as actor and director for *l'Avarice et la Colere* (*Greed and Anger*), and Henri Vidal appears in *La Gourmandise* (*Gluttony*) under Carlo Rim's direction. Finally, in charge of the sketch linking the rest is Georges Lacombe, and the chief character is played by Gérard Philipe.

A host of stars (Danielle Darrieux, Simone Simon, Jean Gabin, Daniel Gélin, Madeleine Renaud, Ginette Leclerc) also appears in the most interesting new film to be premiered in Paris recently. This is Max Ophüls' *Le Plaisir*, which contains three Maupassant stories. The reviewers generally have been somewhat restrained, inevitably comparing it with the exceptional achievement of *La Ronde*. Such is usually the price of fame, however, that Ophüls can afford to pay. If he is reproached by some for understanding Maupassant less well than Schnitzler, he need not take it as an offence.

Work in Progress

Britain

Stage producer Peter Brook: *The Beggar's Opera*, in Technicolor, adapted by Christopher Fry and Dennis Cannan, music by Arthur Bliss, settings by Wakhevitch, and John Gielgud as John Gay.

John Huston: *Moulin Rouge*, a life of Toulouse-Lautrec, with Jose Ferrer.

Carol Reed: a Simenon story. Thorold Dickinson: a film about Malta during the war, scripted by W. E. C. Fairchild.

Noel Coward's *Tonight at 8.30*, produced by Anthony Havelock-Allan, directed by Anthony Pelissier, with Kay Walsh, Valerie Hobson, Stanley Holloway.

Charles Frend: *The Cruel Sea*, adapted by Eric Ambler.

Hollywood

Charles Chaplin: *Limelight*, story of an English music-hall comedian who comes out of retirement, with Buster Keaton and Claire Bloom.

Elia Kazan: *Mississippi Woman*, from a Tennessee Williams script, to be shot mainly on location in the Mississippi delta.

Fred Zinnemann: *The Cyclists' Raid*, actual story of a small American town invaded by fifty adolescents on bicycles with a craze for violence; and *The Member of the Wedding*, from Carson McCullers' novel and play, with the original Broadway cast, Ethel Waters, Julie Harris, Brandon de Wilde. Both for Stanley Kramer.

Also for Kramer: Edward Dmytryk directs *The Dirty Dozen*, from a play by Harry Brown.

George Stevens: three Ambrose Bierce stories in one film—*An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*, *A Watcher by the Dead*, *An Heiress from Redhorse*.

Billy Wilder: *Stalag 17*, from a Broadway success about a prisoner-of-war camp in Germany, with William Holden and Charlton Heston.

Anatole Litvak: *The Steeper Cliff*, with Oskar Werner, from a novel about the American occupation of Germany. William Wyler: *Roman Holiday*, comedy of a princess who gets bored and falls in love with a newspaperman, with Audrey Hepburn.

Cecil B. de Mille: *Queen of Queens*, life of the Virgin Mary. Rita Hayworth back again in *Affair in Trinidad*.

France

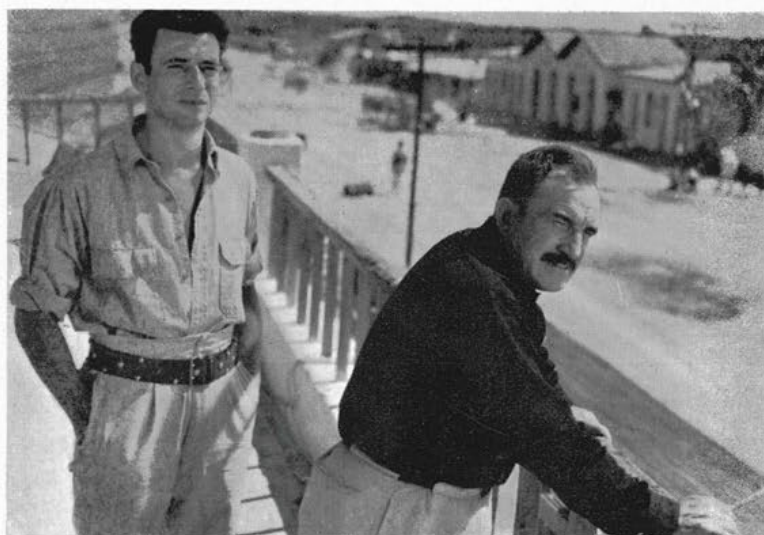
René Clair: a comedy, *Belles de Nuit*, with Gérard Philipe and Martine Carol.

Marcel Pagliero: *La Putain Respectueuse*, from Sartre's play, with Barbara Laage and Ivan Desny.

Claude Autant-Lara: *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, from Laclos' famous novel of adultery and intrigue.

Italy

Jean Renoir: *La Carrosse d'Or*, in Technicolor, with Anna Magnani, from a Merimée story about a troupe of travelling players in Peru.



Clouzot's "Le Salaire de la Peur", a film about truck drivers in North Africa, with Yves Montand and Charles Vanel



Alexander Mackendrick's "Mandy", with Terence Morgan and Phyllis Calvert as the parents of a deaf child, whose predicament disrupts their marriage



Hildegard Knef in Eric Pommer's new German production, "Detour"

WHO WANTS TRUE?

Gavin Lambert



Chaplin: "City Lights"

Scenario Editor: "I was looking through another story you wrote. . . . I liked it. . . . It was true, and moving—"
 Embittered (and broke) scriptwriter: "Who wants true? Who wants moving?"
 —Sunset Boulevard.

"Some opinions come from the heart, and if a man has no fixed opinion he has no fixed sentiments," a French moralist observed; fixed sentiments are seldom forthcoming from critics to-day. Admittedly they are rather unfashionable, perhaps because one has seen sentiment so frequently abused or degraded, and admittedly few modern works of art are "committed"—there is a convenience as well as a *chic* in concealed allegiances. At least, though, most arts have a tradition of fixed sentiments from which to deviate; disconsolate, one can go back—to earlier periods, happier climates, larger feelings, for a yardstick of human expression.

The difficulty is that the heart, as has so often been remarked, cannot be mapped or charted. Indefinability exposes the expression of sentiment to all kinds of falseness and evasion. One is on safer ground with analysis, social or political commentary, any kind of polemic. The times have produced an enormous number of aesthetic tracts, in which even praise takes the form of logical dissection; the bareness lies not in the analysis, but in its isolation, which seems to spring from the fear, or dislike, or mistrust, of

admitted passion. "*Think before you speak is criticism's motto; speak before you think creation's.*" Thus, E. M. Forster on the *raison d'être* of criticism in the arts—and if any *raison d'être* is to be found, the two methods must at least be reconciled on the common ground of the work of art in question. Passion without analysis won't help, but nor will analysis without passion, which is nothing if not "committed". If one wants true and moving in the cinema, in a more than lip-service sense, then commitments are vital.

Younger than the other arts, the cinema has suffered more than they on account of the climate in which it operates. The subject of as many tracts as the drama or the novel, it has known no other continuity of critical approach. From the first, its voices were those of argumentation rather than instinct. With a new medium, preoccupation with techniques, conditions and effects were valuable and inevitable, and if one surveys the bulk of film criticism, one is struck by the amount of excellent theorising on how films should be made—analysis of their stylistic properties, of the relations between artists and businessmen, the cinema's contribution to international understanding, its social effects, and so on. But if one looks further, for judgments on what has been or can be expressed in human terms by film makers, the prospect is disconcertingly bleak.

There have been only two widely formulated points of view in the cinema, and they were in many respects identical. The Soviet cinema, based on explicit social and political ideas, used the medium to convey these to its audience: Grierson's "creative interpretation of actuality", again based on political and social convictions, less doctrinaire in themselves but equally exclusive, was developed to the same end. Both movements were concerned to discover some kind of aesthetic of propaganda, and in both the leading film makers were also the leading critics. As Eisenstein described the spirit of himself and his contemporaries—"our spirit urged us towards life—amidst the people, into the surging actuality of a regenerating country"—so Grierson was emboldened to compare the role of the cinema in public relations with that of the *Congregation de Propaganda Fide*, and the patronage of talent by the Empire Marketing Board with that of Leonardo and Michelangelo by the Medici.

Public relations: the term is self-descriptive and self-limiting, like the phrase used by Grierson to clinch his comparison with Renaissance Italy, "institutional advertising" being applied to the work of its painters and sculptors. One can't help feeling this to be more picturesque than apt, and to prove the limitations of a particular aesthetic. It is echoed in a different form to-day, however, by Richard Griffith, probably the most distinguished exponent of the school of social conscience. Stressing the necessity for the film maker to have the common touch, he writes: "*An artist may use what virtuoso methods he likes in his films so long as his subjects are emotionally important to the majority; if they are not, he cannot work at all.*"

Eisenstein was aware of the antithesis between the Soviet cinema and that of other countries, just as Grierson opposed himself to current practices—the triviality in form and content of many studio-made films, which he (questionably) attributed to their form rather than their makers. The documentary thesis was also suspicious of "aesthetic" views of cinema, and gained a notable convert, in fact, in Paul Rotha. In the preface to his revised version of *The Film Till Now*, Rotha emphasised that his original concern with films was primarily aesthetic; the book is an exploration of style and technique. The 1949 preface records the

changeover. *"The screen's reflection of a people's character and ideals and traditions, its unlimited power to create goodwill and promote understanding, its unequalled importance as a medium for public communication are motives which have been largely overlooked in the scramble to monopolise this universal show business."* This is more flexible than "institutional advertising", but still preoccupied with the relationship between a film and its audience, and not with what is surely the more vital relationship: a film and its maker.

One can extend this by saying that the emphasis is all general, all cerebration, and no particular, no passion. A major difference between the two movements was that Eisenstein and Pudovkin and their colleagues were concerned also with developing personal styles (often widely varying) for the expression of a collective ideal, while the tendency of propagandists elsewhere was to develop a collective style. Consequently, personal or human qualities were discussed, when at all, in general terms. An article by Rotha on "The Development of Cinema" (in *For Filmgoers Only*) begins by dividing films into four categories: Story, Documentary, Cartoon and Absolute. (It seems a sign of the times that "Absolute" should be defined as "experimental abstract expression".) The tendency to generalise about the personal continues to-day amongst critics interested more in the film audience than the film-maker relationship, sometimes confusingly. In "The Missing Element in the Cinema" (1948), Richard Winnington sums up the creative problem:

The missing element is the artist himself, and we will find him not as a director or producer, but as a writer who inscribes on paper, with a completely visual power of writing, the thing that will be put down into celluloid by craftsmen.

The preface to *The Film Till Now*, however, offers a different emphasis:—

Only the director can be the main creative mind that really gives life and breath and emotion and meaning to the writer's ideas.

II

Who wants true? Who wants moving? A pendulum of reaction has swung from the extreme of form to the limit of content, and not yet paused with sureness between them.

Thirty years ago the cinema's stylistic possibilities were new and exciting; the propagandists reacted against the limitations of over-concern with form, but the total result of their work, though strong in collective purpose, appears lacking in individuality. It is difficult not to feel sometimes that one is in a waiting-room while, across the corridor, the cinema is laid on an operating table, receiving transfusions of social conscience, injections of location work, and having various industrial tumours removed. One writes and talks too much about "the cinema". It is too abstract. Even as an abstraction, the cinema is too complex to contain all the generalisations it invites. In its most vital sense, besides, it is not "the cinema", but a number of films made by individual artists of fixed sentiments. Since the fixed sentiments of the Soviet cinema and of Grierson's movement have, creatively, contracted, one's attention is focused even more sharply on the individual. This is a situation unlikely to change for, as Rotha acutely pointed out nearly twenty years ago: ". . . So many craftsmen have turned to the documentary propaganda cinema as offering a fuller scope for their ability. But again it is rare to find propaganda which is in accord with the mind of the director. It is no solution. It is a compromise." The solution comes, for the film maker and the critic, when the sentiment is fixed in himself.

At the point where style becomes most closely merged with the artist's whole personality—and the most interesting, most rewarding styles are usually the least detachable—criticism becomes most difficult. One is reminded of Dr. Johnson being asked to define poetry. *"Why, Sir, it is much easier to say what it is not. We all know what light is, but it is not easy to tell what it is."* And he never did. Tastes, preferences, pleasures, spring from the particular and can only be described with frequent reference to it. The advantage of theory is its explicitness; its disadvantage, the lack of intimacy and passion which is the substance of the finest imaginative work. In his films and his critical writing Eisenstein made plain what he intended. *"Mastering the elements of filmic diction, the technique of the frame and the theory of montage . . . called upon to embody the philosophy*

Ford:

Henry Fonda as "Young Mr. Lincoln"





Clair: "Sous les Toits de Paris"

and ideology of the victorious proletariat" is lucid if chilling. Grierson's well-known "creative interpretation of actuality", by no means the aim or prerogative of documentary exclusively, is less revealing than his simpler statement: "The ordinary affairs of people's lives are more dramatic and more vital than all the false excitements you can muster. That has seemed to me something worth spending one's life over." If the false excitements of "institutional advertising" had not intervened, ordinary people's lives might have been, in fact, more fully explored.

It is significant that the two great doctrinaire movements of the cinema encompassed, but could not contain, a poetic talent with sympathies and responses more personal than the doctrines. Dovzhenko seems to me the most completely gifted of the famous Soviet directors, and perhaps Humphrey Jennings was really the only example of "the new kind of artist" called for by Grierson, though he may not have been what Grierson originally had in mind. The brilliance of Eisenstein, the application of Pudovkin, look respectively a little cold and a little stolid by the side of Dovzhenko's genius: *Arsenal*, with its rapt symbolism, *Earth*, with its transfixed lyrical slowness, its quiet revelation of character and living, would seem to personify the "attack of individualism" against which Eisenstein was on his guard. Dovzhenko, indeed, writing in the 30's, revealed different methods and intentions. For him, "through the smallest amount of material which is at hand, is expressed the greatest quality of ideas and social emotions". In the same way, *A Diary for Timothy* is a personal film in a collective atmosphere, and with its sometimes capriciously private emphasis, its ground of association and intuition, not a public relations achievement at all. (The collective, again, made its inroads on Flaherty, whose *Industrial Britain*, *Man of Aran* and *Elephant Boy* remain his least distinguished work.

Sacrifices to ideology or doctrine can be no less harmful

than sacrifices to commerce, and the first issue must always be the motive of the artist in approaching his material. Enough good films exist unimpaired, or relatively unimpaired, to speak for their makers. At their most successful, the best film makers have created their own conditions and methods—of working inside or outside studios, for governments, film or oil companies, of accepting chores as the price of occasional freedom, of using professional or non-professional actors or both. . . . No serious critic, naturally, is uninterested in these problems, and most will come to the same conclusions. Not so, though, on the greater problem, less discussed but more fiercely contested. The serious critic subscribes to an abstract idea of "good" films, and of audiences more ready to accept them than many producers believe. Pressure to define "good" films usually results in the compilation of competitive lists—probably the only possible way. If one has compiled such a list, it should always be in one's head; there is no other yardstick as certain.

When *City Lights* was revived eighteen months ago, Richard Winnington appended the following list to his column in the *News Chronicle*. "My list of the world's greatest films, fought out with colleagues Gavin Lambert and Lindsay Anderson, amounts to nine (we cannot decide on the tenth). They are *Childhood of Maxim Gorki*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Earth*, *The Road to Life*, *Zero de Conduite*, *Le Jour se Leve*, *Bicycle Thieves*, *Italian Straw Hat*, *City Lights*." The list makes its preferences plain enough; it includes among the elect, Chaplin, Ford, Vigo, Dovzhenko, de Sica, Donskoi, Carné and Prévert, Clair, all of whom have, or had, the bond of human affections, who wanted true and who wanted moving. They shot in studios, on location, used all kinds of players, worked for different companies and organisations. (Two absentees with an equal right to inclusion, to whom the same applies, are Flaherty and Renoir.) They are all also artists of fixed sentiments

—fixed roughly at the same point, though some, like Chaplin and Carné, have moved away from it. The list, in fact, points the existence of more than half a dozen first-rate directors in the first fifty years of cinema who have been humanists and who, even when despondent—as in the case of *City Lights*, or *Le Jour se Lève*, or *Bicycle Thieves*—managed, as Renoir writes in this issue, not to see people like a tourist looking at crowds from a hotel balcony, but to portray them with love.

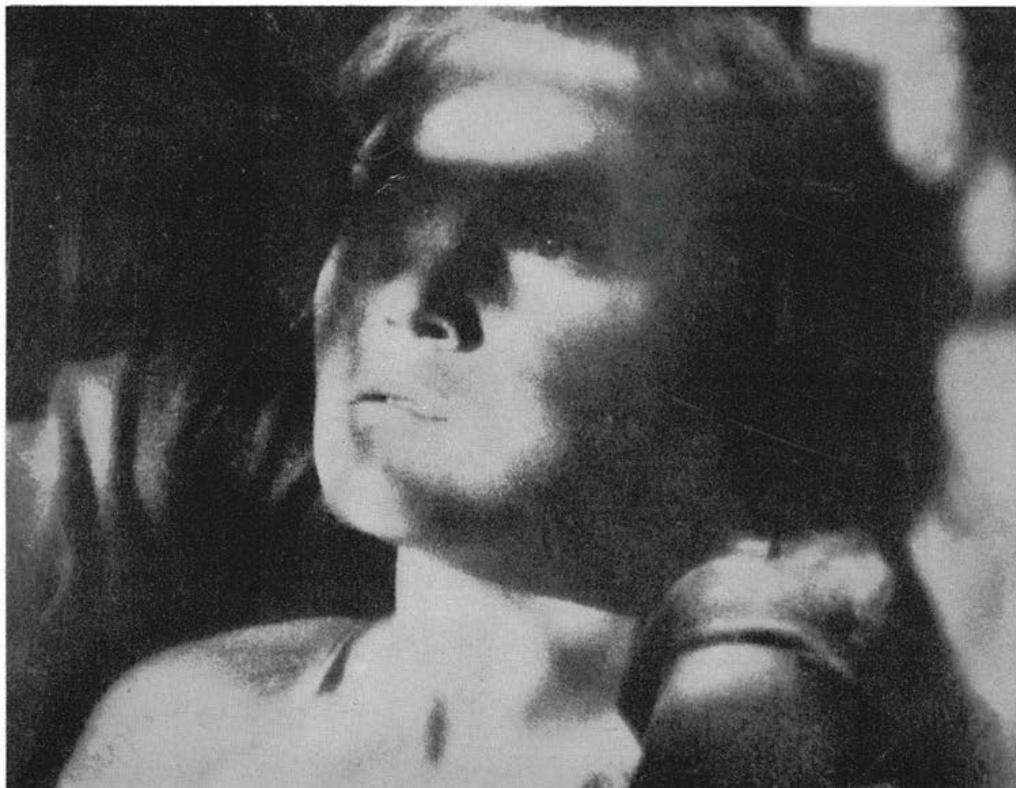
How affections are nourished and expressed under present conditions is something of a miracle. The motive force of Chaplin, de Sica, Carné, seems to have been an emotional bond with the poor, the dispossessed, the downtrodden; in different ways, the treasured experiences of childhood and youth liberated the imagination of Vigo, Donskoi, Dovzhenko; allegiance to traditional virtues, the search for simple solidarities, inspired Ford; curiosity and delight travelled with Flaherty and, in more sophisticated regions, with Renoir. As for the miracle itself, the business of the critic is to record, not to explain, it; the films are their own explanation.

A simple, in itself unoriginal confession like Renoir's on the necessity of affection and goodwill, or de Sica's—*"To see is very useful to an artist. Most men do not want to see, because often the pain of others troubles them. We, on the contrary, want to see. Our one aim is to see"*—is something for which we may be peculiarly grateful. The worst danger of film criticism, or any kind of criticism, to-day is that of slipping over into relative values. One doesn't want or expect an exclusive diet of masterpieces, but one does need principles. Without them, all kinds of

things get overpraised—at the moment, the meretricious American "sociological" film. Without particular allegiances, not just to be brought out when compiling lists of Great Films, but as something permanent and sustaining, the adroit contractions and distortions of human experience typified in, say, *Ace in the Hole*, or *Pinky*, or *The Well*, may well be accepted with the dutiful reserved clichés of praise. Yet what is "outspoken" in making a film about intense contemporary situations and resolving them in a claptrap of melodrama and sentimentality? Comparisons, on the whole, are a just and inevitable method of criticism; one exposes the essential puerility of Wilder's "bitterness" most compactly by setting it against Bunuel's *Los Olvidados*.

Individual films and individual film makers are the critic's treasure-house, and the only true renovation of his spirit. *"Culture is on the horns of this dilemma; if profound and noble it must remain rare, if common it must become mean,"* Santayana observed in a sentence which should make us all cautious, particularly before treating *Quo Vadis* or *The Greatest Show on Earth* too lightly. Thousands of people see thousands of films, and most people see bad films, because most films are bad. The critic and anyone who loves films has always to resist the invitations of mediocrity, which can be subtle and persuasive. Audiences will not suddenly change their tastes, nor film companies their standards. In the presence of so much anonymity, the need for personal response, personal contact, becomes all the greater. Directives for "the cinema" are apt to exhaust themselves while certain film makers and certain films remain. Response, new and renewed, to these is the only thing which can save the convert and convert the unregenerate.

Dovzhenko: "Earth"





Jean Renoir: Jeanne Marken and Sylvia Bataille in "Partie de Campagne"

PERSONAL NOTES

Jean Renoir

PEOPLE ask me about my development since *La Règle du Jeu*. I don't think this is a question of any importance.

First, one does not make a film completely on one's own. A film is the work of a group. Clearly there is one man who influences this group, who in practice leads and animates it, the equivalent to what artisans used to call their master. In the early days of American films, this was often a star player. One can talk about "a Douglas Fairbanks film or a Mary Pickford film" because they influenced the work of their collaborators and assistants more than anyone else. Sometimes a writer provides the most significant contribution. But most frequently it is a film director. In Europe to-day, a film is still primarily the work of its director; in America it is apt to be the producer's creation.

Being a director, I am convinced that I and people like me are the only cooks capable of dishing up a really choice meal. I know too, though, that we can do nothing without the collaboration of our sauce-makers, poulterers, butlers, etc. . . . to say nothing of the restaurant proprietor. There are first-rate restaurateurs and there are cheap ones. The latter are continually bothering their chef, irritating him with advice—a little more salt, too much tarragon in the chicken . . . The first-rate producers—forgive me, restaurateurs—leave their chefs in peace. Their talent lies in choosing wisely, and in surrounding themselves with a unit and with technical resources that suit their personality.

If this fails, the restaurateur can always throw everyone out.

Only the result counts in this world, and the result is the product not only of my own work, but that of actors, technicians, artists and artisans of many kinds. That is why my own development will not, by itself, explain the difference between *La Règle du Jeu* and *The River*. One must also trace the development of the various people who worked with me on these two films, and touch also on the interior history of other films I have made between 1939 and 1949.

The fact that one does not develop all by oneself simplifies the question. Even at a distance, people of very different civilisations travel almost in the same direction. And the world we know, the world that binds our interests, our civilisation, our affections, travels the same road.

I was ten years away from France. The first time I passed through Paris again, I met my old friends and we took up the conversation not where it had been left off, but where it would have got to if we had continued to see each other every day.

I am talking, of course, of my closest friends.

This assertion is disturbing enough. I am sure it is true in so far as it concerns me. If it is also true of the majority, it has direct bearing on the national idea to which we have subscribed since the time of Joan of Arc.

Evolution, then, occurs by groups—not individually.

There are a thousand ways of creating. One can make potatoes or children grow, or discover a new planet.

What attracts me to film-making is what also attracts certain novelists or composers—indeed, anyone who tries to create something in the world of art. For I believe more and more that the cinema is an art. And, in so far as it is in art, it can serve among other things to give its public as exact an account as possible of this collective evolution.

When I say that the cinema is an art, I admit that it may be a minor art, tainted by industrialism and commercialism. But isn't it much the same with tapestry or pottery? Urbino ware, the Beauvais tapestry, are undeniably works of art. They come, however, from a workshop and, like a film, their manufacture has called for the collaboration of authors, technicians, financiers and tradesmen. And, after all, the presentation of a play or a symphony, or of frescoes decorating a palace, is preceded by financial and technical compromises much the same as those which form the inevitable prelude to a film.

In this life, one can choose one's group. More often, chance puts one there. It does not matter; the essential thing is that our voices are not isolated voices.

I realise that my influence has been sufficiently great in all the films I have made for the major responsibility for the final work to be attributed to me. But it would be equally vain to deny that the influence of my collaborators on me has been very great. I have tried to assimilate it in such a way that it can help me to strengthen my own knowledge of life. For how can one learn to know life if not through other human beings? A great problem is not to remain a spectator, not to look at the emotions of other people like a tourist looking at a foreign crowd from his hotel balcony. One must take part. Without this, one remains an amateur. It takes two people to have children. And it is necessary to love, if only physically.

When making a film, the sympathies between collaborators—I ought to say "accomplices"—become extraordinarily intimate. This apparently ordinary fusion is perhaps the cause of a certain genuine dignity in our medium—which has, besides, like all great mediums, its trifling aspects.

I must honestly say that I have always avoided becoming involved in a production that would bring me up against hostile personalities. I do not believe that argument produces enlightenment. I believe, on the contrary, that one does one's best work when digging the same trench in the same direction.

To be able to choose one's own working conditions obviously means renouncing the idea of making a fortune.

There are artists whose feelings are ahead of their time, and others who are behind. Those who feel simultaneously with the great mass of people are clearly the most successful. They hardly open their mouths before their public recognises its own thoughts. The truly great think in advance. In an ideal film unit there would be some who think in advance and others who are just up to the moment. I believe that great films are the result of a unit following an artist who thinks in advance. This doesn't mean that the director or writer, cameraman or actor, or sometimes simply adviser—whoever he may be—is always commercially right.

Even artistically he can be wrong. In running more quickly than others he fulfils a function. He plays the part which has been given him in this great world which the Hindus say to be "one" and of which, according to them, we are only a part, in the same category as a tree, a bird or a stone.

In cutting a way through the jungle, it is as well to beat away invisible dangers with a stick in front. Sometimes the stick encounters a solid branch and breaks in your hands; sometimes it resists, but your arm is numbed. During these last years I have done something of this kind. I did not want to stay still. But the needle of the compass I consulted was wild, and it was very difficult to find the way. All the same, I am very proud of this. It proves I have not lost contact with this unstable world. Few can pretend to-day that they know where they are going. Whether they are individuals, groups or nations, chance guides them. People moving towards a definite destination owe it more to their instinct than their intelligence. When I made *La Règle du Jeu*, I knew where to go. I knew the evil which gnawed my contemporaries. This doesn't mean I know how to give a clear idea of this evil in my film. But my instinct guided me. Consciousness of danger provided me with the situations and the answers, and my companions felt as I did. How worried we were! I believe the film to be good. But it is not so difficult to work well when the compass of disturbance points one's true course.

I found the same kind of certainty with *The River*. I felt mounting inside myself this desire to make contact with my neighbour which I believe the whole world shares vaguely to-day. Perhaps evil forces deflect the course of events. But I feel in the heart of men a desire, I will not say for brotherhood, but—more simply—a curiosity. This curiosity remains still on the surface, as in my film. But this is better than nothing. Men are very tired by wars, privations, fear and doubt. We have not yet reached the period of great enthusiasms, but we are entering into the period of goodwill. I and my companions felt this in India, even during the bad days when Hindus and Mohammedans were killing one another. The smoke from fired buildings did not stifle our confidence. We thought only that these men were behind their times.

All this is very vague. Such feelings are difficult to formulate. I risk much in writing that I believe I have predicted these aspirations toward goodwill. If I am wrong, people will laugh at me. I take the risk confidently.

VISITS TO BABYLON



F. Scott Fitzgerald and Hollywood

Penelope Houston

DURING its first half-century, the relationship between the cinema and the novelist has been marked by unmistakable qualities of envy, of acerbity, of persistent, uneasy tension. The industry, with the swaggering assurance of the nouveau-riche, pays handsomely for talent or material which it has scarcely troubled to learn how to use. Aldous Huxley is set to work on *Pride and Prejudice*, Faulkner to cut Hemingway to the pattern of a wartime novelette; Hecht adapts *Wuthering Heights* and Isherwood makes an Ava Gardner vehicle out of Dostoevsky. Writers see their own work mutilated to meet box-office fashions or censorship taboos. Literary critics—like drama critics, who tend to survey the stage appearances of film stars with the weary condescension previously reserved for performing animals—treat the cinema as a road to damnation. Novelists who have been press-ganged into the alien service take their money and leave, sometimes to avenge themselves with pictures of a Hollywood matching Renaissance opulence with a Borgia talent for intrigue and deception.

At bottom, perhaps, the problem is more serious: Scott Fitzgerald wrote in *The Crack-Up*:

I saw that the novel, which at my maturity was the strongest and supplest medium for conveying thought and emotion from one human being to another, was becoming subordinated to a mechanical and communal art that, whether in the hands of Hollywood merchants or Russian idealists, was capable of reflecting only the tritest thought, the most obvious emotion. It was an art in which words were subordinated to images, where personality was worn down to the inevitable low gear of collaboration. As long past as 1930, I had a hunch that the talkies would make even the best-selling novelist as archaic as silent pictures . . . there was a rankling indignity . . . in seeing the power of the written word subordinated to another power, a more glittering, a grosser power.

The advance of the communal art may be inevitable; it is also as alarming as any revolutionary process, and the novelist may choose to see himself as the last defendant of the old order. Yet the attraction of the industry is not only in the price it pays: power itself fascinates.

Scott Fitzgerald's own career shows the interaction with the cinema that has become almost a pattern for the successful novelist. Hollywood bought his works, and did its worst with them. Fitzgerald made two abortive visits as a script-writer and then, at the time when his popular reputation

was at its lowest, when the critics had attacked *Tender is the Night* and he had documented the history of his own collapse in *The Crack-Up*, he went to Hollywood again. His unfinished novel, *The Last Tycoon*, may be taken to sum up what he felt: the old, powerful fascination of the medium, the disillusioning experience of strategy and compromise, the sense of waste and corruption and of vast, partly realised possibilities. In a nation that "for a decade had wanted only to be entertained" the pull of Hollywood, however it might deflect a writer from his true course, was not to be resisted.

II

In the early 'twenties Scott Fitzgerald, on the strength of a single adolescent novel which seemed to catch the mood of a generation, achieved that fantastic, irrational popular success typical of a decade of wild enthusiasms. His short stories were bought, inevitably, by the plot-hungry cinema—three were filmed between 1920 and 1922. His second novel, *The Beautiful and Damned*, was filmed by Warners in the year of publication, with Marie Prevost and Kenneth Harlan as the ill-fated, if scarcely tragic, Gloria and Anthony.

Photoplay commented:

If he depicts life as a series of petting parties, cocktails, mad dancing and liquor on the hip it is because he sees our youthful generation in these terms . . . it is our youthful fascisti possessing the measure of money and knowledge, fighting against the swing of the pendulum which has brought us the you-must-not era.

Fitzgerald, in *Echoes of the Jazz Age*, said of the films of the 'twenties:

The social attitude of the producers was timid, behind the times and banal—for example, no picture mirrored even faintly the younger generation until 1923 . . . there were a few feeble splutters and then Clara Bow in *Flaming Youth*; promptly the Hollywood hacks ran the theme into its cinematographic grave.

The screen versions of his own stories were probably among the more feeble of the splutters.

The Great Gatsby was first produced by Paramount in 1926, directed by Herbert Brenon, with Lois Wilson as Daisy, Warner Baxter as Gatsby, Neil Hamilton as Tom Buchanan and William Powell as Wilson. The general tone of the film may perhaps be imagined from comments in the trade press; there was some disapproval of a scene showing Daisy drunk on her wedding day, and the *Kinematograph Weekly* complained that "all the characters are morally unsound". It summed up the plot as a story of "How one man's failure brought happiness to two others"—Tom and Daisy, in other words, came out all right.

After this, the cinema ignored Fitzgerald for more than twenty years. M.G.M. acquired the rights of *Tender is the Night*, but after Irving Thalberg's death Fitzgerald wrote to a friend "I think that he killed the idea of either (Miriam) Hopkins or Fredric March doing" the novel. As late as 1949, however, perhaps because of the fashion for screen psychiatry, M.G.M. were dickering with the idea of filming this fascinating but, one feels, almost untranslatable book. The title appeared in a production schedule, and that was all.

In the same year Paramount resurrected *Gatsby*, directed by Elliott Nugent from a script by Richard Maibaum and Cyril Hume (the latter a *Tarzan* screen writer, among other credits). This was the occasion for a quite remarkable accumulation of imaginative disasters, of which the most striking was the casting of Alan Ladd as Jay Gatsby. The

essence of *Gatsby* is his capacity for wonder, his overpowering imaginative audacity in the service of "a vast, vulgar and meretricious beauty"; the incorruptible dream, expressed in make-believe luxury and built on a lurid foundation of corruption, points the contrast to the alluring, shallow, vicious world of the Buchanans. The screen's favourite impassive gunman could be expected to suggest nothing of this. Betty Field, more subtly miscast, played Daisy with sensitivity but a somehow rather too consciously worked out sense of the period; Barry Sullivan was an anonymous Buchanan; Macdonald Carey a half-hearted Nick Carraway, and Shelley Winters a too strident Myrtle Wilson.

But the film, with its *March of Time* style introduction to the 'twenties, with flashbacks breaking up the whole balance and compression of the novel, missed all its chances. Even the visual symbols—Gatsby's disorganised, dream-like parties in his Xanadu fantasy of a palace, the waste land round Wilson's garage, the sticky summer heat in the New York apartments, the green light shining from the Buchanan's dock—were fumbled and lost. The tone, although rather truer to the original than one imagines the 1926 version to have been, was weakened by a final orgy of repentance; Daisy repents and tries to warn Gatsby; Jordan Baker, whose activities have been extended from cheating in a golf match to chiselling a car out of Gatsby, repents; unforgivable, Gatsby repents. His last speech strings together the tired clichés of the gangster hero: he is going to "take this rap for the sake of boys like Jimmy Gatz"—so much for the incorruptible dream.

In spite of everything, the film had that curious air of flawed distinction, apparent in the occasional attitude to a character, in stray lines of dialogue (not Gatsby's famous "her voice is full of money" which, typically, was omitted) that identify the source however faltering the adaptation. Paramount shot their bolt too soon. They are not likely to film Fitzgerald's wonderfully sharp, controlled, evocative novel again for some time, but, after *A Place in the Sun*, one feels that in George Stevens they might have the director to do it.

III

Scott Fitzgerald's own Hollywood career began in 1927, when he went out under contract to United Artists to do "a fine modern college story" for Constance Talmadge. The result, *Lipstick*, was never made; Arthur Mizener, in *The Far Side of Paradise*, calls it "a competently plotted if conventional story about a girl at a prom". Later, with his characteristic mixture of apparent naive conceit and disconcerting self-knowledge, Fitzgerald wrote:

I had been generally acknowledged for several years as the top American writer both seriously and, as far as prices went, popularly . . . I honestly believed that *with no effort on my part* I was a sort of magician with words. . . . Total result—a great time and no work. I was to be paid only a small amount unless they made my picture—they didn't.

In 1931 he did some work for M.G.M. on a film called *Red Headed Woman*; this was made, with Jean Harlow, Chester Morris and Charles Boyer; the script credit went to Anita Loos. Fitzgerald had worked under difficulties and was dissatisfied. "I left with the money but disillusioned and disgusted, vowing never to go back, tho' they said it wasn't my fault and asked me to stay."

He did go back, however, in 1947. It may be taken as almost axiomatic that the cinema does not attract a novelist

at the height of his powers (there is a revealing little scene in *The Last Tycoon* when Stahr explains, "we don't have good writers out here . . . we hire them, but when they get out here they're not good writers") and Fitzgerald in 1937 was in debt, out of fashion, and worn out. At the same time his hopes, as usual, were high, and were characteristically expressed in a letter to his daughter:

The third Hollywood venture. Two failures behind me though one no fault of mine . . . I want to profit by these two experiences—I must be very tactful, but keep my hand on the wheel from the start—find out the key man among the bosses and the most malleable among the collaborators—then fight the rest tooth and nail until, in fact or in effect, I'm alone on the picture. That's the only way I can do my best work. Given a break I can make them double this contract in two years.

But a little later he said of Hollywood:

A strange conglomeration of a few excellent, over-tired men making the pictures and as dismal a crowd of fakes and hacks at the bottom as you can imagine.

In any case, if the journey to Hollywood was a retreat, it was a determined, combative retreat. Fitzgerald's first and last screen credit was for *Three Comrades*, made by M.G.M. (to whom he was under contract) and directed by Frank Borzage. This was the sort of high-class tear-jerker, as artificial in its own way as the crazy comedies, that almost died out with the 'thirties: social significance has partly replaced the luxury of manufactured emotion. The *Comrades*, three young German soldiers in the first war, go into the garage business together; one (Robert Young) engages in some rather vague political activity and is killed; another (Robert Taylor) falls in love with a tubercular girl (Margaret Sullavan, adept in wistful pathos), who dies as slowly and as theatrically as Camille.

It is peculiarly difficult to apportion credit for this script: there is the novel, there is the co-script writer, Edward Paramore, an old hand, and there is the producer, Joseph Mankiewicz. Fitzgerald wrote bitterly to him:

To say I'm disillusioned is putting it mildly. I had an entirely different conception of you. For 19 years . . . I've written best selling entertainment and my dialogue is supposedly right up at the top. But I learn from the script that you've suddenly decided that it isn't good dialogue and you can take a few hours off and do much better. . . . Oh, Joe, can't producers ever be wrong? I'm a good writer—honest. I thought you were going to play fair.

The emphasis on "best selling" is a part of Fitzgerald's oddly divided attitude to his own work. But one wonders how many letters like this have been written during Hollywood's first forty years.

If it is impossible to guess how much of Fitzgerald the film holds, at least the temper and mood are not altogether alien to him. The doomed heroine, sentimentalised though she is, seems a blurred version of a Fitzgerald girl; the note of controlled, compassionate despair appears at moments almost incongruously authentic.

After this, Fitzgerald never again achieved that *sine qua non*, a screen credit. M.G.M. employed him on a Joan Crawford picture, *Infidelity*, which, in spite of some amused comment on the star's limited emotional range, he apparently found interesting: it was shelved because of censorship difficulties. Arthur Mizener names the films on which, on and off, he did some work: *A Yank at Oxford*, *The Women*, *Madame Curie*, *Gone with the Wind*, *Raffles*. M.G.M. dropped his contract after taking up the first option. They had used him, as one might expect, on "big" pictures, but

rather as an odd job man, called in to tinker with a script, than as a creative writer. Bad luck, bad judgment, Fitzgerald's own temperament and state of health, must have been to blame for this abortive career. But Hollywood traditionally breaks its writers by indifference, and the system does not encourage the fitting of the individual to the subject he can best handle.

The most notorious episode in Fitzgerald's screen writing career is that used by Budd Schulberg in his novel *The Disenchanted*. Schulberg, then a young script writer, and Fitzgerald were despatched by Walter Wanger to a college week-end which was to figure in a musical, *Winter Carnival*. Schulberg's story gives a bitter, tragic picture of the writer, employed solely for the cachet which his presence is supposed to give the producer in college circles, wandering drunkenly, incoherently around, extemporising fragments of an impossible script, shepherded and pitied by his rather reproving, governess-like young collaborator, until the producer finally packs him off to New York.

In 1940, Fitzgerald found a more attractive job. Lester Cowan bought one of his short stories, *Babylon Revisited*, and Fitzgerald was employed on the script. The story, of a jazz age expatriate's return to Paris, his efforts to recover his daughter from a sister-in-law who blames him for his wife's death, the destruction of his hopes, casually and completely, by two survivors from the past, is, in its acute and agonising sense of despair and regret, one of Fitzgerald's finest. He said that his work on the script was "more fun than I've ever had in pictures". The film was to be called *Cosmopolitan*. But Shirley Temple was wanted for the child's part, was not available, and the plan was shelved. Since then Fitzgerald's script has apparently been considered for publication, and a few months ago the *Motion Picture Herald* reported that Paramount had bought the rights of *Babylon Revisited*. One must assume that Fitzgerald's own script will never reach the screen. It was almost his last job as a screen writer.

IV

To accuse Hollywood of wasting Fitzgerald would be foolish; his strong visual sense, his superb dialogue, his undoubted interest in the mechanics of the film, suggest that he might have been employed to better purpose. But the facts of the case may have been more complicated. Instead, he turned to a novel, *The Last Tycoon*, strangely and impressively free from that angry resentment which runs through so much Hollywood fiction, from Nathanael West to Huxley. Previously—he had a taste for the histrionic—he had approached the cinema in short stories, through characters in the novels: here he tried to come to terms with the whole *mystique* of Hollywood.

In 1922, a character in *The Beautiful and Damned*, the enigmatic vulgarian film producer, Bloeckman, who effects the final humiliation of both Gloria and Anthony, symbolised the strange new forces of big business. In *Tender is the Night* it is through the resilient, hopeful young actress, Rosemary, "catapulted by her mother on to the uncharted heights of Hollywood" that we are introduced to the enchanted, exhausted, decaying world of the Divers. Rosemary herself, one feels, will be subject to a cruder corruption.

Fitzgerald approached the centre more nearly in a short story, *Crazy Sunday*, written after his second Hollywood visit. The unreality, the suspicion and self-destruction of Hollywood

people are caught with the precision and tension that marks all his best writing. In the director who "meshed in an industry, paid with his ruined nerves for having no resilience, no healthy cynicism, no refuge", there is an indication of the price which, he believed, Hollywood demands of those who resist its conditions.

Edmund Wilson says of California, "all visitors from the East know the strange spell of unreality which seems to make human experience on the Coast as hollow as the life of a troll-nest where everything is out in the open instead of being underground". The typical Hollywood novel has that unreality—for the writer, Hollywood has proved only a precarious substitute for the real world. The standard hero is the disillusioned novelist himself, examining with horrified amazement the stages of his escape from the lures and betrayals of California. Fitzgerald, however, chose to write not as an exile or a tourist but from within. His narrator, the producer's daughter, belongs to the first generation that could grow up with the industry, and her viewpoint is made explicit "... I accepted Hollywood with the resignation of a ghost assigned to a haunted house. I knew what you were supposed to think about it, but I was obstinately unhorrorified." The approach is echoed in the tone and pitch of the writing; the intimate, conversational style handled so flexibly that it retains an objective detachment, a wide angle of vision.

The novel has a particular context and perspective. Stahr is based on one of Hollywood's almost legendary heroes, the late Irving Thalberg. Thalberg, who died in 1936, was in charge of production at M.G.M. (the position now held by Dore Schary); he is credited with that power of organisation, care for detail, and knowledge of when to spend money, allied to a taste for quality, that make the great impresario. Concerned as he was with the locus of power in Hollywood, Fitzgerald felt that it had shifted away from the director. In his notes he wrote of Stahr:

His relation with the directors, his importance in that he brought interference with their work to a minimum, and while he made enemies—and this is important—up to his arrival the director had been King Pin in pictures since Griffith made *The Birth of a Nation*. . . . When he interfered, it was always from his own point of view, not from theirs. Thus his function was different from that of Griffith in the early days, who had been all things to every finished frame of film.

Stahr's authority, all powerful in the world he has made, dominates the novel. Self-made and semi-educated, his understanding of pictures instinctive rather than technical, he provides a directed, unifying control. Fitzgerald pays particular attention to his relations with writers; there is the scene in which he explains to the disillusioned English writer, Boxley—who represents the characteristic intellectual condemnation of an art so hedged about by conditions and compromises—that to make pictures one must learn and respect their language. Stahr's own conception of his function has a naive, illuminating grandeur. "I never thought I had more brains than a writer has. But I always thought that his brains belonged to me—because I knew how to use them. Like the Romans—I've heard that they never invented things, but they knew what to do with them."

Money is never far from the forefront of his world, and Stahr holds his ground because he has persuaded the money men to a temporary acceptance of his dictatorship. There is a specifically Hollywood idealism in the scene in which Stahr rocks the deepest convictions of the financiers by his plan to make a film that is bound to lose money. He has

"moved pictures sharply forward through a decade, to a point where the content of the 'A productions' was wider and richer than that of the stage". His responsiveness appears in the curious incident of the Negro, coming down to the beach to read Emerson, who, by his casual rejection of the movies, persuades Stahr to reconsider his whole production schedule.

Stahr himself cannot survive and Fitzgerald—writing in 1940—saw his novel as "an escape into a lavish, romantic past that perhaps will not come again into our time". The industry has grown too complex for the role of the paternalistic employer, with his intense faith in personal relationships and his understanding both of the financial strategy and of the picture itself. Stahr's dream, like *Gatsby's*, belongs in the past. Fitzgerald died with the novel only half-written, but Stahr's defeat was to be brought about at the hands of the ruthless financier Brady, who neither knows nor cares about the making of films. Defeat comes to Stahr from within, in the loss of his health and control, and from both sides: Brady and his confederates are able to ally themselves with the unions. Stahr, the last tycoon, falls before the increasingly mechanistic, inhuman development of the industry.

His benevolent tyranny is exercised in a world not customarily taken seriously. But the power of Hollywood is a fact, and the novel, accepting it as such and alive to the possibilities and dangers, compels consideration of its nature. Fitzgerald's dying, solitary, tragic hero is placed at the centre of an authentic battlefield.

Stahr, by character and by circumstances, is majestically isolated. Around him are the down and out producers, second-rate writers, has-been stars still searching for their vanished glory, cut-throat business men who retain the standards of the circus tent, sycophants and swindlers. The moral atmosphere is one of corruption and a tired, jaded indifference. Only the financiers and the technicians habitually know where they are going, and an occasional Stahr, able to set in motion, to direct, to "care for all of them".

This is the Hollywood with which Fitzgerald leaves us. His experiences of it are worth documenting because Scott Fitzgerald, sharing as he did that heightened awareness and responsiveness which he gave to *Gatsby*, could perhaps express more acutely than others the simultaneous attraction and repulsion that the novelist is likely to feel. The achievement of Hollywood is a *fait accompli*; an industrial civilisation's inordinate demand for entertainment has been met; barriers of taste have been shattered to impose a new democracy: in the sight of the film, all audiences are equal. The cost has been enormous in waste, in misdirected energy, in the fatal attraction the cinema holds for the second-rate. The novelist wants at once to get his hands on the new medium and to rebuild the barriers. All this Fitzgerald sensed and recorded. In *The Last Tycoon*, in Stahr's persuasion of Boxley, he perhaps found his own solution.

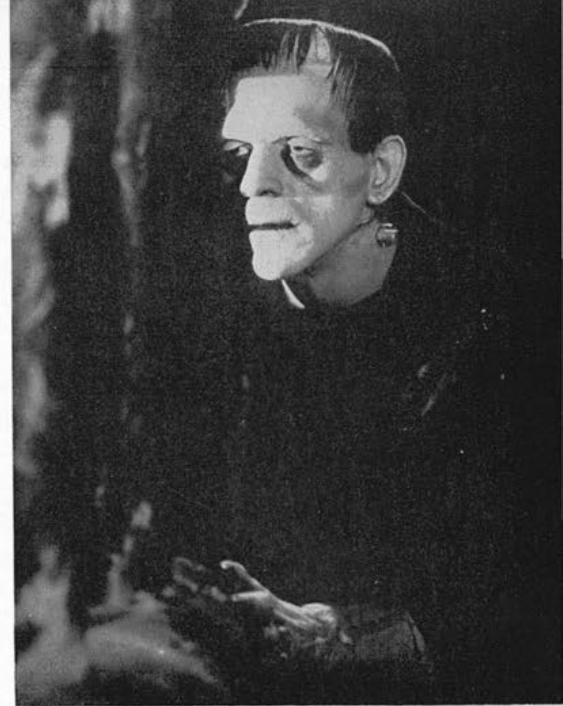
The facts about Scott Fitzgerald's work on *Lipstick*, *Red Headed Woman* and *Cosmopolitan* are taken from Arthur Mizener's biography of Fitzgerald, *The Far Side of Paradise*, as are the names of the pictures on which he worked without obtaining screen credits. Quotations from Scott Fitzgerald's letters are also taken from Mr. Mizener's book. I am grateful to Mr. Mizener and to Eyre and Spottiswoode, the British publishers of *The Far Side of Paradise*, for permission to make use of this material. The British publishers of Fitzgerald's novels, and distributors of *The Crack-Up*, are Grey Walls Press.



Ghoulies and Ghosties

Curtis Harrington

Right: Karloff as Frankenstein. Left: The Golem responds to a command. Below: David Gray's dream of his own death in "Vampyr"



THE ability of the camera to present hallucinatory or supernatural phenomena was one of the first discoveries made by the earliest creators of cinema; indeed, the most outstanding of the early innovators, Méliès, presented a great variety of supernatural visions in his "magically arranged scenes". His films abounded in fairies and ghosts and powerful magicians. But because of the camera's more obvious talent for objective recording, the cinema, as it subsequently grew and as it still is made use of to-day, has largely served to reconstruct a very earthbound reality. In the United States the financial failure of a "fantasy" is considered almost certain, and so they are rarely attempted. The few successes (the *Topper* series, *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*) have mostly been whimsical, using the tricks made possible by the varied mechanical resources of the camera for laughter rather than mystery or awe; while films that started out seriously, like *The Uninvited*, usually lost their supernatural convictions halfway through and dwindled away into obvious comedy. In Europe, ghosts have been the subject of more genuine wit, as in René Clair's *The Ghost Goes West* and, more notably, Max Ophüls' *La Tendre Ennemie*, in which three ghosts—of a woman's husband and her two lovers—sit on a chandelier during a dinner party given to celebrate the engagement of the woman's daughter to an old man she does not love. They finally alter the course of her life by persuading her to elope with someone else.

The fact of the matter is that camera "magic", despite its slickness and theoretically real and solid appearance, is a fairly obvious thing; a man double-exposed so that he can be seen through looks not so much as we imagine a ghost might, but rather as a man double-exposed. The latter effect used to-day is really only a formal device; we say, "there is a figure double-exposed, which means he is supposed to be a ghost". But we are not convinced; there is not truly a "suspension of disbelief", so we can hardly be captured even momentarily by the illusion, as we may so often be by the dramatic pull of a situation, or the dramatic reality of a character. The mechanical fact stares us in the face, and that is all.

During the 'teens and 'twenties the supernatural was treated in many ways, perhaps most often by the Germans, whose love of mysticism is reflected strongly in their cinema. There were supernatural elements in all of the early German legend films, such as Galeen's *The Golem*, von Gerlach's *Chronicle of the Grieshuus*, and Lang's *Siegfried*. The first contained a remarkably well handled sequence of the summoning of a demon according to the kabbala; the second—about the ghosts of two tormented lovers who rescue a child from scheming relatives in a Gothic castle—had Lil Dagover appearing in double exposure rather often as a warning spirit; and the third showed Siegfried's borrowed cloak of invisibility in all its practicality. The Germans



also produced the first film version of Bram Stoker's classic vampire story, *Dracula*, although it was considerably re-written by its scenarist, Henrik Galeen, made into a kind of old German legend and retitled *Nosferatu*. In this the director, F. W. Murnau, used with, to contemporary eyes, rather crude but charming effect, the device of speeded action to show the supernatural strength of the master of the castle. A genuine sense of the macabre was conveyed by this, in combination with a general air of mystery and the frightening make-up of Max Schreck as the bloodthirsty count. Here double exposure, that obvious and so dangerous device for showing the supernatural, was used toward the end of the film to convey the death of the latter; and as a commentary rather than sustained image (the figure dissolves into the air, disappearing altogether) its use was, even, effective.

About this same time in Hollywood the French director Maurice Tourneur, who had established a reputation for his pictorial style (not, one suspects, without considerable help from his art directors) during the late 'teens, produced Maeterlink's *The Blue Bird* (1921) and a fantasy called *Prunella* (1922), about a strange little girl brought up in a strange house by three grim aunts and two prim maids, who kept her from the outside world, but could not prevent her falling in love with a pierrot. In these the fantastic effects were achieved as they are on the stage (both were originally plays), mechanically rather than by trickery of the camera. After *The Four Horsemen* and its misty apocalyptic visions, Rex Ingram included a fantastic and terrifying dream sequence in *The Conquering Power* (1921), and the morality tale within his *Trifling Women* (1923) was an elaborate and macabre vampiric love story in the tradition of Huysman's *A Rebours*. There were fantastic episodes also in Ingram's *Mare Nostrum* (1926), and in his version of Maugham's novel *The Magician* (1927), with its central figure drawn from the late Aleister Crowley, which contained an orgiastic dream sequence concerning Pan. Other American directors during the 'twenties dealt with the fantastic from time to time as their story material demanded, but Tourneur and Ingram were perhaps the two most consistently interested in using films to present fantasy rather than reality.

It is difficult to place where the fantastic "horror" film, as a genre, became established; but in America certainly the actor Lon Chaney, in a series of alarming make-ups, helped to establish the tradition. However, it was not until the coming of sound, and, incidentally, the stock market crash, that the fantastic horror film became a staple Hollywood commodity. With *Dracula* (1930) directed by Tod Browning (he had earlier directed Lon Chaney in *The Unholy Three*), and James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931), the genre was definitely launched. These were followed by, to name a few of the most outstanding, *The Werewolf of London* (1933), *The White Zombie* (1933), *The Mark of the Vampire* (Browning,

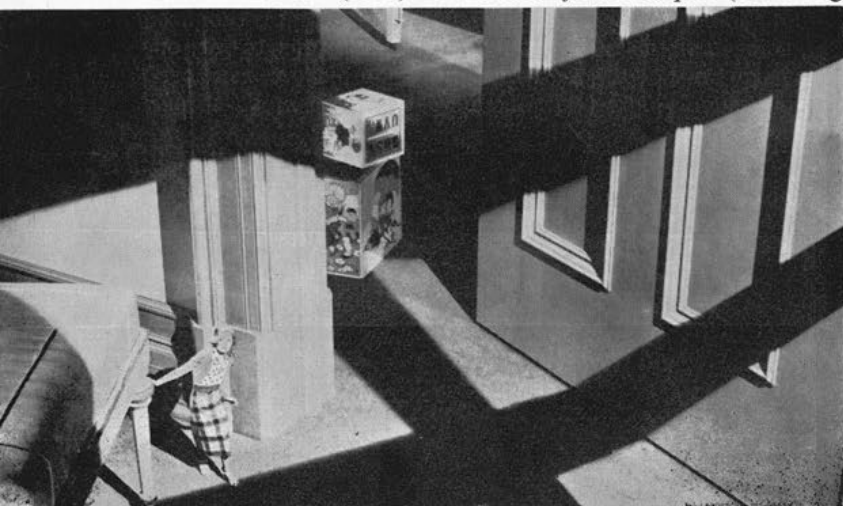


The vampire of "Nosferatu"

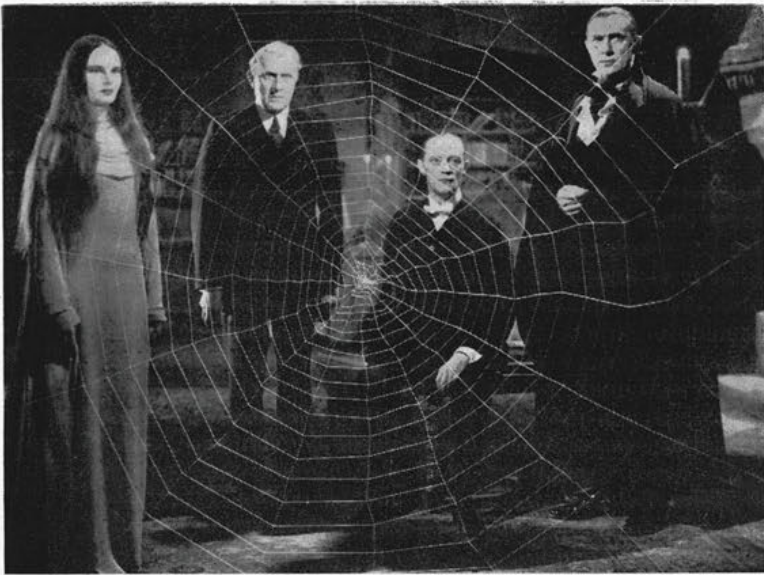
1933), with Professor Zalen, an expert on vampire lore, solving the mystery of vampiric attacks on a young girl in a derelict castle: *The Mummy* (1934) and *The Black Cat* (1934), based on the Edgar Allan Poe story: *The Devil Doll* (Browning, 1934), about a French scientist who could reduce living creatures to a sixth of their normal size: and *The Bride of Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1935), with its splendid climax of a bride being created for the monster during a raging thunderstorm at night, the bride (Elsa Lanchester) being brought to life inside a bottle but horrified, upon emerging, at her intended mate. James Whale, a British stage director imported to America, brought to his films a fine sense of Gothic terror in the English tradition, as well as an irascible though perhaps less evident sense of humour. Tod Browning's work was less distinguished, though *The Mark of the Vampire* has its following. Its illusion, however, is quite destroyed when the ending of the film reveals the whole story to have been a carefully staged hoax.

Edmund Wilson has remarked how the popularity of the ghost and horror story in literature rises during times of outward stress in society, and certainly the vogue for this genre of film follows the same pattern. By 1939 the horror film had almost ceased to be produced, and it was only during the subsequent war that it was revived by the late Val Lewton, a producer then at R.K.O. studios. During the time the popularity of the horror film had declined in inverse proportion to the gradual revival of economic strength and prosperity, it had not only been produced less often but became exclusively "B", or low budget, second feature work. Thus, when Val Lewton produced his first film of this type, *The Cat People* (1943), it was at the customary low cost. To everyone's surprise, it had an amazing success as a first-class feature, and took in a great deal of money. It was, however, something slightly new.

The story of *The Cat People* is of Irena (Simone Simon), descendant of a race who, at times of emotional crisis, could turn into cats. Her psychiatrist is sceptical, but a few days later his body, bloody and clawed, is found in her apartment. Lewton had observed that the power of the camera as an



"The Devil Doll." A victim reduced to a sixth of her normal size finds the real world alarmingly enormous



"Mark of the Vampire." The vampire (left) holds her victims in thrall

instrument to generate suspense in an audience lies not in its power to reveal, but its power to suggest; that what takes place just off-screen in the audience's imagination, the terror of *waiting* for the final revelation, not the seeing of it, is the most powerful dramatic stimulus toward tension and fright. Moreover, where a fantastic subject is concerned, in order to obtain the modern audience's "suspension of disbelief", they must be kept in suspense as to the exact nature of whatever phenomenon they are to be frightened by—and this centre of suggested terror must be surrounded by human, understandable people in realistic though possibly exotic surroundings. Thus the predicament of the girl in *The Cat People*, her growing realisation of her impulses, was made direct and real. Upon this formula Lewton produced a number of horror fantasies, made by directors now well-known: Jacques Tourneur (*The Cat People*), the son of Maurice Tourneur, Mark Robson and Robert Wise. The films dealt with zombies in Haiti (*I Walked with a Zombie*), devil worship (*The Seventh Victim*), a child's imagination (*The Curse of the Cat People*), the living dead (*Isle of the Dead*), and an especially macabre murderer (*The Leopard Man*). Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Body Snatchers* was also imaginatively filmed with Lewton as producer and Wise as director, as was a story based on Hogarth's drawings of *Bedlam* (Mark Robson).

Though made independently on a very low budget, a film that deserves mention along with the Lewton product is Frank Wysbar's *The Strangler of the Swamp*. Wysbar, who directed *Anna und Elizabeth* and *Fahrman Maria* during the early 'thirties in Germany, came to Hollywood as a refugee during the war, and made several rather curious low-budget films. *The Strangler of the Swamp*, the only fantasy among them, dealt with the malign ghost of a man unjustly hung in a southern swampland. Although the treatment was on the whole realistic, it contained suggestions of German expressionism, and succeeded in evoking with considerable effect the mist-laden, spirit-haunted country in which the strange story takes place.

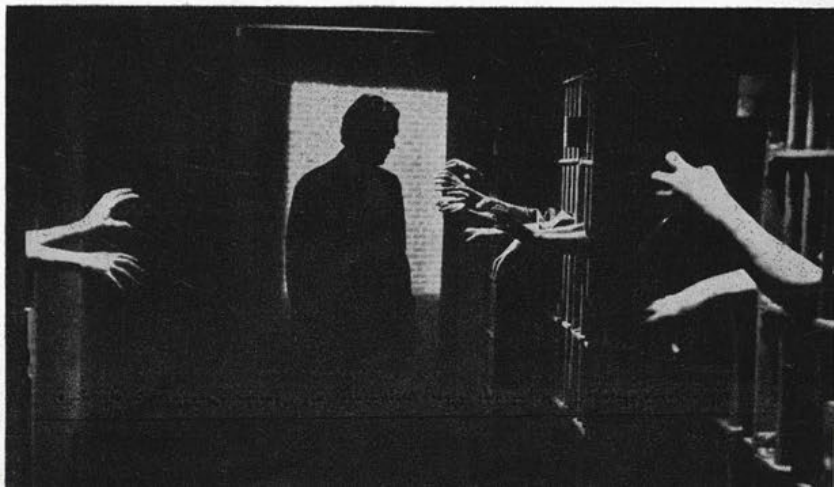
These have been the most interesting horror fantasies

produced in Hollywood; one must record, for other reasons, the films made by Universal Studios during the war years. Whereas Val Lewton attempted within commercial restrictions to do something new and imaginative, all the films produced at Universal (a studio famous as the home of "horror" film, though in the early 'thirties both Paramount and M.G.M. probably produced an equal share) were lifeless repetitions of ancient penny-dreadful formulas. A whole series of crudely ridiculous films were made, exploiting some famous originals—*House of Frankenstein*, *Son of Dracula*, *The Wolf Man*, *The Spider Woman*, *The Mummy's Ghost*—and the final death agony of James Whale's originally marvellous creation, *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*. Columbia Studios product of this type was only very occasionally better; Edward Dmytryk's *The Devil Commands* (1942) built to a genuinely frightening climax, but it was weighted by a dully concocted story—a grief-stricken husband tries to contact the spirit of his dead wife through a brain machine, with the aid of a weird medium.

With the end of the war the popularity of horror films quickly diminished, so that since 1947 there have been few, if any, produced. Even Universal gave them up. Recently a new type of fantasy has come to the screen in the form of "science-fiction" films, which "explain" the supernatural in terms of science and in which mysterious happenings are generated by machines rather than human beings. At least one of these, however, proves to be simply a modern version of Mary Shelley's old morality thriller, "Frankenstein; or A Modern Prometheus". In *The Thing*, horror and suspense are produced during the first part by only suggesting verbally the nature of "The Thing", a monstrous vegetable-man from another planet, but as soon as he is seen, fully clothed and looking altogether like Karloff's creation of "The Monster" in *Frankenstein*, the illusion of horror that has been built up is quickly dispelled. By now we have seen this creature too often; we produced him on this earth, and we expect another planet to be able to think up something different.

2

This brief outline of, primarily, the supernatural horror film may serve to indicate what has, in the main, been done with the genre; now this varied, sometimes remarkable, but relatively unimaginative output must be contrasted with one truly serious and brilliant creation, Carl-Theodor Dreyer's *Vampyr*. Dreyer's work, besides, is particularly interesting in this respect, since he is the only outstanding film director to have used the supernatural more than once to express a personal outlook on life. Produced in France during 1930 and 1931, about the same time as *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, Dreyer's *Vampyr* was released in 1932, at the time the vogue for horror films, at least in America, was mounting quickly. The film was premiered in Berlin, and



"Bedlam"



"Vampyr." The old lady
(the vampire) and victim

although it was dubbed (easily and effectively, for there was very little dialogue) in both French and English it had little success outside of Germany, where its mystic quality seems to have been appreciated.

Inspiration for the story of *Vampyr* is credited to Sheridan le Fanu's "In a Glass Darkly". A reading of this collection shows that only one story bears any relationship to the film, and that only vaguely, the tale of a vampire, "Carmilla". Rather than from any particular literary basis, the film seems more to have developed from its settings (it was shot entirely on location in various deserted buildings), in which were placed a certain number of rather extraordinary characters living out their destiny in the shadow of a human vampire. Briefly, the continuity reveals the arrival of a young man at an inn beside a lake, where, during the night, a man enters his room and leaves with him a sealed package, with instructions that it is to be opened upon his death. The next morning the young man investigates a strange building where shadows dance eternally, and visits an odd little doctor at his office where he meets also an old lady (who is the vampire). Presently he arrives at a chateau whose master is the man who had come to his room at the inn. The man has two daughters, Gisèle and Léone, and two servants. Leone is ill, having been attacked by the vampire. Suddenly and mysteriously the girls' father is shot, and the young man opens the package he had been given earlier. In it is "The Book of Vampires", which relates the vampire legend, and tells how the vampire can be destroyed. Léone leaves her bed and is discovered in the woods surrounding the chateau, attacked once again by the vampire. The doctor is called to administer a transfusion, and the young man gives his blood. Later the young man's *doppelgänger*, in a dream, experiences his enclosure in a coffin by the doctor and the vampire, and he is carried toward the cemetery. Then, awakening, he goes to the cemetery, where the old servant opens the tomb of the vampire and drives a stake through her heart; she turns to a skeleton, and Léone sits up in bed, released. With the power of the vampire no longer sustaining him the doctor runs away in panic, and is trapped by the old servant in a mill where the machines bury him slowly in a shower of white flour. The young man and Gisèle, meanwhile, ride in a boat through the misty lake and at last, arriving on the other side, walk into a forest illumined by the sun.

As with any film of style and value, a bare recounting of the plot (I prefer in this case the word "continuity", since it sounds more sequential, in a filmic sense, than constructed, in a literary sense) does not give one any idea of what the film is actually like; the structure of *Vampyr* is based more upon imagery than idea. Ebbe Neergaard, in his "Carl Dreyer", one of the British Film Institute Index Series, tells how the script called for the doctor to die by sinking into a bog of mud. Yet when Dreyer came by chance upon a plaster-works where everything was covered with a fine white dust, he realised the image-requirement for the film was that the doctor die in whiteness, and so an old flour mill, where the doctor could be trapped in the cage where the bags are filled, was chosen for the film. The earlier sequences, then, were carefully photographed by Maté to match, in style, the final image material. The first arrival of the young man at the inn is suffused in a late afternoon greyness. The sequence of his discovery of the building filled with mysterious shadows is in tones of white and grey. The succeeding exteriors—the young man's arrival at the chateau, his walk to the cemetery, and Léone's encounter with the vampire, are all extremely diffused so as to give a kind of preternatural mist-effect. There is no sun in the film until the final moment.

What is especially striking about *Vampyr* is that light and shadow become more than just contributors to a consistent style; they serve as dynamic participants in the story unfolded. Dreyer recognised immediately the principle that Val Lewton applied to his series of films dealing with the supernatural twelve years later, that you must only suggest horror; you cannot show it, or at least, if you do, it must only be momentarily, for you cannot sustain it. It is the audience's own imagination, skilfully probed, that provides, out of its well of unconscious fear, all the horror necessary.

In what are perhaps the most uncanny and terrifying moments of *Vampyr*, only a wild inexplicable play of light and shadow is seen; but the terror of the malevolent supernatural force is brilliantly conveyed. One of the most effective of these moments is when the doctor, after having given the blood transfusion, leaves Léone's room and the young man runs after him, only to reach the head of the stairs and find them quite empty; then we hear an abrupt crash and see the shadows cast by the staircase railings jerking crazily around on the walls of the stairwell. Throughout the film all such moments, actions communicated by purely

filmic means, are left an unexplained part of the general uncanny atmosphere. We are transported to the heart of a battle between ancient evil and the young, the pure in heart, taking place in a land convincingly haunted, where anything may at any moment happen and does.

One cannot properly divorce *Vampyr* from Dreyer's other work, as it must be considered partly, along with these, as an expression of his personality. Certainly Dreyer is one of the very few directors of whom this may be fairly and safely said; no major studio chose the script of *Vampyr*, and there was no "front office" to interfere in any way with the execution. This seems to be fairly true also of *Jeanne d'Arc* and *Day of Wrath*—the former made immediately before *Vampyr*, the other twelve years after it. Seen in perspective the three films make up a kind of trilogy; they all bear definite affinities of theme, style and content. Each presents a struggle between good and evil, age and youth, and in each there is an intense concern, almost amounting to obsession, with the act of death; in *Jeanne d'Arc* the progress toward death by fire; in *Vampyr* the death of the head of the manor, then the true death of the living dead and of the doctor and his assistant, and, during the whole of the film, the delicate suspension near death of Léone; and finally, in *Day of Wrath*, the death, again by fire, of the old lady declared a witch, the death of the parson, and Anne's acceptance, at the end of the film, of her identity as a witch, indicating surely the death to follow. In all three of the films the conquering of this miasma of death and old age is shown as only a temporary thing—a gesture of St. Joan's; the young lovers' idyll in *Day of Wrath*; and although in *Vampyr* the young man and Gisèle escape, at the end, they never really seem to emerge from the land of phantoms. Another recurrent figure that one notices in many of Dreyer's films is the powerful, often malevolent old lady. She was not, of course, seen in *Jeanne d'Arc* (where certain of the older priests might be said to have taken her place), but she was portrayed with humour very early in Dreyer's career as *The Parson's Widow* (1920) and she mastered the tyrant in *Thou Shalt Honour Thy Wife* (1925). In *Vampyr* she becomes the ancient, powerful living dead creature of the title, and in *Day of Wrath* she is two forces—the narrow, suspicious old mother of the parson, and Marte, the old lady accused as a witch who goes to her death uttering dire curses against those who have condemned her.

As remarkable as the photographic treatment of *Vampyr* is the sound. Wolfgang Zeller composed a score that for

suggestivity has seldom been equalled, perhaps because there have been no other films since then requiring quite such imaginative work. It is not, of course, music that could be divorced from the film. The dialogue is very sparse and effectively pointed, as when, after giving the blood transfusion to Léone, the young man complains (he is resting in an adjoining room) to the doctor, who peeks out at him from behind the door of Léone's room, that he is losing blood. "Don't be silly", the doctor replies very slowly, "your blood is in here". Sound effects are also used with the utmost suggestivity. One remembers the inexplicable noises heard in the doctor's office, distant barkings and cryings, which make the young man ask the doctor if there are children or dogs on the premises. "There are no children or dogs here", the doctor replies. When, from a subjective viewpoint, we experience with the young man our enclosure in a coffin, there is unique horror as we hear the close grinding of the screws into the coffin-lid, and experience the splutter of a match struck to light a candle placed on the coffin-lid by the vampire who, in doing so, peers at us intently.

The last sequence of the film is very formally constructed and gives us, I believe, insight into Dreyer's creative method, one which always tends toward formal control, especially when he is dealing with incident and outward movement rather than people. Here we have the escape of the young couple counter-pointed with the death of the doctor in the flour mill. The sequence is cross-cut, so that at one moment we see and hear the machinery rhythmically grinding out its white death, and the next we see the young couple gliding slowly on the mist-covered lake, the image being accompanied by a slow sustained note of music. This combination of shots is repeated in alternation until the couple get out of the boat and go into the sunlit forest. The very final shot is a close-up of the white turning gears of the flour mill machinery; their movement slows, and at last stops. Fade out; we have reached the end of the adventure. The construction and the image-material here employed is perfectly cinematographic; the meaning communicated is melodramatic incident abstracted into a pattern of time, space and sound. The sum of this design toward a conclusion becomes greater than the actions of its parts; it brings to an end not only the adventure we have had (for it has been *our* adventure as much as the protagonist's), but encloses the film perfectly in its own uniqueness as the sole cinematic work that shakes us with its revelations of the terrors that still haunt us in the deep and unknown places of the human psyche.

"Vampyr." An image of terror





The 1920's

Lucille le Sueur, alias Joan Crawford, born forty-four years ago in Texas, was a child hooper. She sustained, of course, a serious foot injury which threatened her career: recovered, landed on Broadway, and at the age of nineteen won an M.G.M. contract, kept for twenty-five years. She was whisked into *Our Dancing Daughters*, *Our Modern Maidens*, *Our Blushing Brides*. A simple gay girl and a Charleston champion in the raucous 'twenties, with a tight skirt, bows on her shoes and short fluffy hair she tapped and grinned her way through musicals and romances.

You wouldn't have been specially impressed, after her second film, *Old Clothes*. You'd have expected her to wait twenty years for an Academy Award, which she did.

The camera has most of the powers of the plastic surgeon, and it began to operate on Joan. Over twenty-seven years of screen time, in fact, she has been round and gaunt, blonde and brunette, gay and stark, exotic and homey. A new face, a new identity; in this way, the myth was to grow.

The pictures tell the main story, from the spirited charmer of the 'twenties to the exhausted adventuress of the 'fifties. Round about 1932, two things happened. Joan became gaunt, and a Situation was found for her (or vice versa). The situation,



They Made Me a Myth-I

JOAN CRAWFORD

Daughter
of the
American Revolution



The early 1930's

very simple, was having two or more men in love with her at the same time. Slimmer, darker, a little haggard, she looked the situation; the face seemed to contract to its basic bone structure—so much so, that one had the impression the skin was always stretched to breaking-point across her features. The tiniest movement seemed a contortion, an agony, and any break in this classic deadpan in itself momentous. Perhaps this, combined with her natural simplicity, caused Scott Fitzgerald to observe when assigned to write a vehicle for her:

"Writing for (Joan Crawford) is difficult. She can't change her motions in the middle of a scene without going through a sort of Jekyll and Hyde contortion of the face, so that when one wants to indicate that she is going from joy to sorrow, one must cut away and then back. Also, you can never give her such a stage direction as 'telling a lie', because if you did she would practically give a representation of Benedict Arnold selling West Point to the British."

Ordinary and fabulous: ordinary because she lacked magnetism (except that of an incredibly smooth running, reliable machine), fabulous because of the ritual romantic dilemma of her screen life, the eternal choosing, choosing—between Gable and Tone, Gable and Kruger, Gable and Montgomery. Then, in a curious flop, *Mannequin* (1936, directed by Borzage) she achieved a new dimension and, with it, full mythological stature.

Until *Mannequin*, Joan's life and her films had been one, simple

Left: Drama and comedy of the early '30's—one Joan, two men. "Chained" (Gable, Kruger): "Forsaking all Others" (Montgomery, Gable). Below: Mink and violence of the late '40's, "Mildred Pierce" and "Flamingo Road" (with Sydney Greenstreet)



Some are born Myth, some achieve Myth, and some have Myth thrust upon them. The days of self-made legend in the cinema—Garbo, Fairbanks, Valentino, Pickford—seem to be over, and what has taken their place is probably no less potent though much more artificial: the star, male or female, team or family, of no great intrinsic active personality, who can be shaped, pressed and moulded by the great machine of the cinema into something that expresses for thousands of people a mythical figure enjoying mythical adventures. The star, by some freak of face or circumstance, obliges: producer, director, writer, and audience do the rest.

The star is the Wish. The audience (and the box office) is the Fulfilment.



The 1945 comeback (1)

kind of fable—the Hollywood Cinderella girl, with a foot that every shoe miraculously fitted, and several Prince Charmings fighting for her. Then, suddenly, she straddled a wider social canvas. Her background, in an elementary way, became alive. It placed and clinched her; she was the working girl who makes the grade, she knew poverty and riches, she found that attractive men weren't necessarily rich and rich men not necessarily attractive. She found Life—and the fans, it seemed, couldn't take it.

She was ahead of them; perhaps the setback disconcerted. At any rate, the possibilities of Myth were not immediately pursued. She emerged rather suddenly as Mature, in a series of bright sophisticated comedy parts (*Last of Mrs. Cheyney*, *Susan and God*, *The Women*, *When Ladies Meet*), and, during the war, appeared with memorable incongruity as a heroine of the French Resistance.

Then—silence. Darkness. Was this to be all? Nothing more than an unusually heightened success story of an obliging girl with an obliging photogenic face that an American critic compared to a "talented abstractionist painting"? Two or three years later, we realised that Joan had been simply, wisely, taking stock. A time had passed, a phase ended, the clock struck midnight and the riches really withered into rags; Cinderella could not, just like that, at thirty-seven, go on.

Right: Agony and culture. Joan with Kent Smith in "The Damned Don't Cry" and with Garfield in "Humoresque"



The 1945 comeback (2)

So she turned her rags back into riches, and how she did it is how a fable blossomed into a myth.

Mildred Pierce (1945) was a new Joan—absolutely recognisable of course, but *become part of America*. The crude romantic predicament of one woman, two men, was obviously by itself the point of no return; but Joan had not lived, laughed, suffered and nearly died in movies for twenty years without learning the importance of keeping up with the times. When she came back, she was post-war, her opening images were *film noir* and suggested ominous, existentialist revolution. Taut, grim, shoulders brave yet mysteriously defeated beneath their heavy load of mink—"stark, animal-like and haunted" as an admirer put it—she was a *femme fatale* of the night, violent and desperate.

Story: working girl, ordinary unsuccessful marriage, daughter, separation from husband; slavery to the bone for daughter (selfish and clothes-conscious); success and money, the reward of work; new husband, fascinating but worthless; new husband philanders with daughter; *denouement* of violence. Oscar.

Flamingo Road, *The Damned Don't Cry*, and the magnificent, classic, two-hour *Possessed*, restated the theme. Each time the working girl, after hardship and vicissitude, hit the top; each





A contrast. Left: The Charleston girl of "Our Dancing Daughters" (1927), and the couch-girl of "Flamingo Road" (1949), about to embark on the road to riches, ruin and retribution

time there were two men, the call of Home and the call of Guilt (sex, money); each time, a climax of violence—mink and gun.

Waitress, couch-girl, ordinary housewife, the desire for luxury and romance will always get her to the top. And at the top there is always Guilt: guilt of sex (really attractive men are wicked) and guilt of riches (really wealthy men, though attractive, are wicked). The solution is a useful compromise, usually with Joan going home—but not to the old, weary, impossible home; the first husband or lover has pulled himself together again and

is (presumably) quite attractive as well as armed with comfortable prospects. The introduction of adolescent girl or daughter (*Mildred Pierce*, *Possessed*), with her raw ambition, makes for a dramatic contrast with the seasoned Joan, endlessly searching for the happy mean between rags and riches, sex and safety.

Humoresque was an interesting variation, with Joan venturing into the disillusion of Culture. For the beginning, the rôle of the sexes was reversed. The young struggler (Garfield) was a male violinist from the Bronx, taken up and promoted by an influential society number (Joan). She wore glasses to listen to him playing. "Do you like music?" he asked. "Sure", she said. "Some symphonies, most concertos. . . ." Deserted, in a characteristic last reel, Joan walked out into a smooth, shining sea at night in smart evening dress.

How much of the American unconscious is here, experienced mythologists must determine more exactly. Certain basic elements cannot be ignored. The dual mother-girl image, the woman as the dominant factor—domestically, sexually, culturally, behind the tycoon, the virtuoso, the wastrel and the gangster; the guilty desire for material luxury, to be reconciled with conscience only in an unreal compromise; the tense, lingering sequences of glossy success and simultaneous malpractice, and the much shorter ones equating the family with health and well-being; and the extraordinary dependence of her men—contrary to the Gable days, Joan's co-stars have now mostly a tired, dazed, obscure and hungry look.

Some have found other, more morbid echoes—incest, for instance—in her pictures, but of these, we can be sure, Joan would strongly disapprove. For she herself, the great Crawford, strikes through the frozen make-up, the veil of years, the mink and the hidden wounds, as the same simple girl. Does she know the richness of her fictions, has she felt the terrible hollow lure of the big time—or just a Cinderella success, with its ups and downs? She knits continually, eats everything, has a large establishment, four adopted children, three ex-husbands. And she is writing her autobiography: "Dancing With Cheers in my Eyes". Apt title for a Dancing Daughter of the American Revolution.

CARUSO ON THE MOVIES

William Ludwig

M.G.M.'s. The Great Caruso has been a sensational popular success. Nevertheless, those responsible for the production of the film have carefully considered all the criticisms levelled against it; they have not, the company informs us, been numerous, and many of them have been based on misapprehension or error. They have all, however, been brought to the attention of William Ludwig, who (with Sonya Levien) wrote the script of The Great Caruso. Some of his comments in reply should interest a larger public than the few correspondents for whom they were originally intended. They illuminate two points above all: first, the care that a scenarist has to take in securing authenticity for the details he incorporates, and secondly, what happens when he has secured them. The problems are especially acute in relation to a popular biography of a popular figure, and the motives behind it.

We are grateful to M.G.M. for securing this material for us.

ONE critic says that he recently saw *The Great Caruso* and "it said in the credit titles that it was based on the life of Caruso. May I say here and now that this was utterly false". This gentleman is in error. The credit titles on *The Great Caruso* at no time said that it was based on the life of Caruso. The exact wording, after the writing credit, is "Suggested by Dorothy Caruso's biography of her husband". The credit was specifically worded in this way since we at no time held out to an audience that this was a documentary study with pedantic attention to statistical and actual fact. As the advance publicity stated and as we hoped we made transparently clear, this was essentially the story of a voice. It was our intention to remain true to the mood, character and emotional content of Enrico Caruso's life and still present a dramatic and entertaining picture. It

was obvious from the beginning that the problems of dramatisation required many omissions and alterations not only for legal reasons (libel, slander, invasions of privacy, inability to secure releases from various persons, etc.), but also because it was physically impossible to present more than forty years of a life with statistical accuracy in the course of a two hour film, almost half of which is music. Neither the advertising or the advance publicity nor the credits were planned to deceive our audience. It is unfortunate that this critic did not read the credits more carefully.

Another critic has made the point that "Caruso was not discovered". Discussion of this becomes a problem in semantics. I do not know what this critic means by "discovered". If he means that with no prior preparation,

background or training the Caruso voice suddenly burst full blown and at its peak upon an unsuspecting world, I do not think that this is true. There was a long period of time in which it was quite obvious (actually from childhood) that this was a most unusual voice. Many people were concerned in the training and recognition of this great voice before Caruso even began to sing opera. If we must use the word "discovered" I think each of those who recognised the voice before Caruso attained fame are in a sense "Discoverers". I prefer to use the word "recognition", however, and say that those who worked with him, and with whom he worked had a recognition of the great quality of the voice.

Still another minor point that has been raised is "he never fell in love with a miller's daughter". This is quite true. Enrico Caruso did not fall in love with a miller's daughter. In strict truth, we prayed devoutly that he never did fall in love with a miller's daughter or we are open to suit. It is true that there were a few prior love affairs in the life of Mr. Caruso. In order to avoid legal pitfalls we adopted, changed and disguised them in one unit to preserve what was in fact the emotional result and character stimulus on Enrico Caruso of these situations. In creating the identity of the young lady and establishing her background we went to great lengths to be fictional in order to avoid legal difficulties. However, our research (I assure you it was extensive) indicates that our emotional evaluation was quite sound.

An English critic writes that Caruso's debut in Covent Garden was in "La Boheme" and not "Rigoletto" as we showed it. He is in error. The chart of Enrico Caruso's performances showed that Enrico Caruso first sang in London in Covent Garden on May 14th in "Rigoletto" under the management of H. Higgins. This was Caruso's Covent Garden debut. Caruso's *second* performance in London was on May 24th at Covent Garden in "La Boheme". For documentation I refer him to "Enrico Caruso" by Pierre V. R. Key and Bruno Zirato.

Another criticism is statistical rather than dramatic. It was quite true that Caruso's debut at the Metropolitan Opera House was in "Rigoletto" and not in "Aida" as we showed. In life these performances of "Rigoletto" were over a year apart. On the screen they were less than seven hundred feet apart. It seemed to us that with so many different operatic selections to be included in the picture this was a time to avoid statistics and not repeat in less than a reel the same operatic aria. We, therefore, showed "Aida" which was Mr. Caruso's *second* performance at the Metropolitan.

Someone has pointed out that Caruso's father-in-law was not an operatic impresario. This is quite true but we are at a loss to discover where this gentleman got the idea that we ever said that Mr. Benjamin was an operatic impresario. The script and completed film state very clearly that Mr. Benjamin was a patron of the Metropolitan. Mr. Benjamin was a proprietor of a box in the Diamond Horseshoe. Such box-holders at that time were considered patrons of the Metropolitan Opera Association.

Still another stickler for factual accuracy says that Caruso did not announce the birth of his daughter from the stage. This is true. We show the audience gaining information of the birth and greeting him with cheers of "Viva Papa!" The actual event took place the day after the baby was born and the audience recognised the birth in the warm manner shown. We felt it legitimate dramatic technique to present



Caruso as Caruso



Lanza as Caruso

the birth and the recognition of the audience closer together.

In the film Enrico Caruso danced, and a critic, objecting to this, says: "If you ever take the trouble to read the life story you will find out that he could neither run nor dance". I am reluctant at this stage to take issue with this correspondent on the "trouble" we took to read a library full of documentation on Mr. Caruso. He may be quite correct in saying that Caruso neither ran nor danced. However, his wife, Dorothy Benjamin Caruso, does not quite agree with this objection, since she approved the little scene of the waltz most enthusiastically.

Among minor points raised was one centred on the question of Caruso's death. One correspondent says that Caruso did not die on the stage, but that he died of pleurisy in Naples and not of throat trouble at the Met. This is true. It was for this specific reason that we do not show Caruso dying at the Met. We show him collapsing of a throat haemorrhage (it was in fact his third recorded haemorrhage). He was carried from the stage in shock at the end of the performance. He never sang again. He died less than a year later in Naples of pleurisy. For purposes of dramatisation this period was devoid of interest, suspense or conflict. It was for this reason that after the collapse on the stage we have a long, slow dissolve showing lapse of time and then reveal his friends and companions deliberately made up considerably older to underline the lapse of time as they place a memorial wreath upon his bust in the Metropolitan. Since we were telling basically the story of a voice we felt that the last time the voice was heard was a logical ending save for this brief epilogue as indicated.

The number of critics of *The Great Caruso* is very small compared with the avalanche of praise and the enthusiasm with which the film has, in general, been received. But even these rather niggling criticisms are worth answering although it is doubtful if the critics will ever realise the peculiar problems in making a film of a famous life. Finally one rather emphatic correspondent says that when next we film the life of a celebrity we should stick to fact and not to fiction. This is obviously a matter of opinion. As for myself and, I believe, the majority of our audiences, a dramatic presentation which takes certain liberties with fact while remaining true to character, spirit and emotion is much to be preferred to a statistical chart.

The Current Cinema

AN OUTCAST OF THE ISLANDS

Reviewed by Basil Wright

That the film is about an outcast is no surprise. Johnny MacQueen was one sort of an outcast, and Harry Lime another. Indeed, it may be that Carol Reed has a kind of compulsive interest in the hero who is cut off, or who cuts himself off, from society. What Gide called "the fatal irresponsible acts of Conrad's heroes" may well have led Reed to Willems. For Willems is yet another sort of outcast. Unlike MacQueen, who is cut off from society by his work for the mysterious "party", unlike Harry Lime, who cuts himself off cheerfully with the superegoism of the criminal, Willems becomes an outcast through a fatal and perhaps fated ambivalence. The voluntary act—embezzlement—could be wiped out by Lingard's willingness to give his protégé a break. The involuntary act, the final, irrevocable moment of irresponsibility, is Willems' capitulation, through a fatal inner weakness which he fears so much that he cannot control it, to Aissa, the native girl, and, through her, to a degradation from which he can never emerge.

As a film, *An Outcast of the Islands* builds up to the climatic moment when Willems reaches the point of no return—the horrifying and repellent sequence in which he strings Almayer up in his own hammock and swings him across the fire. From that moment he forfeits all respect; not merely ours, but also his own. I note that some critics have complained that Reed has overstepped the bounds of permitted unpleasantness in this sequence. I disagree; it is as masterly in design, movement, intent and execution as only he could make it, and, for the reasons just stated, its savagery is both justified and dramatically correct.

The whole central section of the film, of which the hammock sequence is the climax, is magnificent. The river village, brilliantly reconstructed in Ceylon from location shots taken in Borneo, stands on its stilts over the muddy water, the huts interconnected by crazy catwalks pullulating with children; and as Willems strides along them, lashing out unavailingly at the laughing kids, Reed uses to the full this opportunity for dramatic movement and contrast. Between the two focal points—Almayer's bungalow on the one side and the chief's hut on the other—the wretched Willems vacillates with the grotesque distortion of a lunatic pendulum, swinging ever nearer to Aissa, ever further from his only chance



"Outcast of the Islands." Kerima, Trevor Howard

of survival. With the exception of the strange final sequence, of which more later, all the really memorable moments belong to this part of the film—the birthday cake episode, in which Almayer (himself an unpleasant enough representative of "civilisation") decides, largely because it suits him to do so, that there is nothing more to be done about Willems; the scenes in the dark hut between Willems and Aissa, in which Trevor Howard gives a most frightening delineation of mingled passion and disgust; Almayer's little daughter screaming "Pig! Pig! Pig!" at Willems as he crosses finally and forever, the fatal boundary; and the little native boy, sometimes urchin, sometimes almost unearthly, who follows Willems everywhere like a puppy. . . In all this we see Carol Reed at his best.

But this is not the whole film. It contains other elements, both of story and character, which seem to me to be disturbingly inapt. This applies particularly to the character of Captain Lingard, cleverly played by Sir Ralph Richardson in a highly stylised manner which cannot but be deliberate. This is a figure from a different world. His words are not real. They are from a book. I am not concerned whether they are Conrad's words (any more than I am concerned with any details about the screen adaptation of the novel); what worries me is that they might be all very well read aloud, but spoken in action they clash with the dramatic realism which dominates the other, and better, parts of *An Outcast of the Islands*.

This formalised approach swamps the whole opening of the film; it spreads to the other characters—notably the trader's assistant played by Wilfred Hyde White; and it descends to the ludicrous while Lingard speechifies to Willems after he has rescued him from the water. I had here the impression that Reed had become entangled with the peculiar literary aspect of Conrad (cf. Michael Sadleir: "... passages occur with words too emphatic for their context, and others where a curious equality of weight is given to words of varying significance"), and that as Conrad, unlike Messrs. Green and Greene, was not there to be argued with, he never got free from the meshes.

In any case I find it difficult to see exactly what Reed intended with his screen Lingard; are we to take him as a frustrated father-substitute, as Jehovah, as an old bore, or all three, or what? It is only in the final sequence that he really seems to mean anything. At this point he does in fact symbolise Willems' rejection by the whole world. As a sequence this is quite one of the most extraordinary things Reed has ever achieved—it must have rained just as hard in the Garden of Eden after the Fall; yet even the moment

"Kontiki" is the film record of Thor Heyerdahl's famous voyage on a raft from Peru to Polynesia, narrated and photographed by Heyerdahl himself. Although rough in continuity and quality (it was shot on 16 mm.), it provides a fascinating stage-by-stage account of this 101 days journey by six Scandinavian scientists



"Los Olvidados." Two of the lost souls

when Willems lacks the moral power to justify his own evil—if nothing else—by pulling the trigger on Lingard, even this moment introduces an almost other-worldly atmosphere, more like a beginning of a new movement rather than, as it should be, a coda.

So the film is divided against itself. Where Reed has taken over Conrad to the extent of converting him to his own filmic purposes the style is perfect, the skill unerring, the effect *boulevardier*. Where, as I guess, Conrad has proved too tough to assimilate, the style falters, or lapses into a kind of formalism. The final effect is a split in the appreciative faculties of the spectator; and this happens despite the fact that the film has a recognisable and satisfactory shape—the prologue in Singapore, the voyage, the main action in the river village, the voyage repeated in terms of Willems' treachery, and the epilogue in the rainswept jungle.

Conrad once wrote of himself: "Those who read me know my conviction that the world, the temporal world, rests on a very few simple ideas . . . It rests notably, amongst others, on the idea of Fidelity". In Willems, as in other of his heroes, he created, as an artist must, the opposite of his idea. This Carol Reed, aided by Trevor Howard's superb performance, has faithfully presented. But the idea itself—whether it should be found in the character of Lingard, or in Mrs. Almayer, or even in the dumb passion of Aissa—the idea itself is lost.

That at least is my own interpretation, perhaps entirely wrong, of this fascinating and provoking film, which has impressed and excited me more than any other film I have seen in the past twelve months (with the possible exception of *The Red Badge of Courage*). I am sorry to have left myself hardly the space to add that, in addition to Trevor Howard, Robert Morley, Wendy Hiller and Kerima give splendid performances, that Vincent Korda, as art director, never puts a foot wrong, and that Brian Easdale's score is impeccable.

LOS OLVIDADOS (Pity for Them)

Reviewed by John Maddison

As might have been expected of a work from the hand that created *Land Without Bread* and the now almost mythical *Age d'Or*, *Los Olvidados* (now acquired by Film Traders for the Academy Cinema) is an extraordinary film. It is also, and this was not to be expected, a finally disappointing one. Why it should be so is not at first apparent, given the film's exceptional quality. But that Bunuel, one of the few really serious artists to express themselves through films, should have failed in so cherished an enterprise is a case worth enquiring into.

Los Olvidados is the first new film of Bunuel's to be seen in Europe for eighteen years. It comes after a wartime period of

harassment spent by him in Hollywood and New York and the production, since 1945, of two or three routine "box-office" films in Mexico City. Bunuel took only four weeks to make it—on a meagre budget. The young Mexicans who play in it (it is about a group of juvenile delinquents) are for the most part non-professionals. The film tells its story of poverty, horror and vice with a complete refusal to compromise—or seemingly so, until one reflects on it a little further.

Visually *Los Olvidados* is extremely beautiful. The credit for this belongs apparently to Bunuel rather than the cameraman Figueroa, whose work hitherto has been incurably "picturesque". Throughout Bunuel restrained Figueroa's flair for the photogenic, we are told, and the result is a tribute to his sense of form. This applies both to the flow of the images and also to the quality of individual shots. In the last number of "Sequence", Gavin Lambert speaks of these images as "bleak, plain and unlovely" and Doniol-Valcroze in "Les Cahiers du Cinéma" goes even further. "There isn't", he writes, "a single shot in the film which can be considered aesthetically pleasing in itself." I find both opinions incomprehensible. The film abounds in images that are often sensuous or striking and invariably well-composed. Whoever was responsible, to have gathered together all this richness in the short space of four weeks is surely a triumph.

Characterisation and the observation of incident are also often on a high level in *Los Olvidados*. Most outstanding, perhaps, is the playing of Estella Inda as the mother of Pedro, the ten-year-old who is led astray by the terrible young ringleader Jaibo. Like everyone else in the film, she is a "lost soul" and, in her case, we believe in her as a real person, "*ni ange ni bête*". The scene in which she spurns Jaibo and then allows him to seduce her is a *tour de force*. Characterisation of this depth and closeness to nature and working-class life is rare in the cinema. For vitality and truth it reminds one of Maxim Gorki's work in *Childhood* and *The Artamonov Affair*. The film also gives one of the most endearing forms of pleasure the camera can provide—the spectacle of children behaving without fuss or awareness of the camera. Whether the youngsters who play "Little-Eye" and Pedro are born actors or not, the hand that directs them in *Los Olvidados* is undoubtedly that of a master. Nothing here is synthetic or coy or studio-bound. Jaibo, the main figure in the film, cruel, magnificent and pathetic, is not fully realised, and it is perhaps in considering him, retrospectively, that one's doubts about the film begin to crystallise.

With all its virtues, why is it that one comes away from seeing *Los Olvidados* with no positive emotion of compassion or anger or



"Viva Zapata" Marlon Brando



"Secret People." Left: Louis (Serge Reggiani) persuades Maria (Valentina Cortesa) to carry the bomb. Right: Maria with the victim of the bomb



SECRET PEOPLE

Reviewed by Gavin Lambert

despair, but only a negative admiration for its technique? It boils down, as one would expect, to a question of attitude. Bunuel's film has been criticised as sadistic, but this charge appears to me to be nonsense. He has equally been praised for being "objective", and it is indeed probable that Bunuel imagined himself to be clinical and unsentimental in his approach. This is a fatal sort of delusion for the artist and it has prevented him from universalising, as he claims to have done, the problem of delinquency in our modern cities. Whether consciously or not, Bunuel is far from detached in his attitude to us, the audience at any rate. He wishes to shock us. This desire is not overt but is unmistakably there from time to time. The accosting of "Little-Eye" by the homosexual city-man is dragged in for effect and really is pretty salacious. What should have been the two most harrowing scenes in the film—the stoning by the gang of the old blind beggar, and their attack on the limless man (they rob him, beat him and immobilise him by sending his trolley hurtling away down the pavement)—are handled without genuine feeling or conviction. One couldn't help comparing this latter scene with certain sequences in Paul Dickson's *The Undeclared* where, because there is no effort after sensation, the heart melts with compassion for the limless. The throwing of the dead body of Pedro on to the rubbish heap at the end of the film is a purely mechanical effect. We are aware that we are expected to be moved or shocked but, unable to share the film-maker's estimate of our naiveté, we refuse. In spite of their great virtuosity, the dream-sequences Bunuel introduces, with their slow-motion horrors, are also too obvious a contrivance. It may be that events since 1939 have changed our attitudes to such "experiments". Between us and *Un Chien Andalou* stand Buchenwald and Belsen. Because of them, as Lionel Trilling says, "the world and the soul have split open of themselves, and are all agape for our revolted inspection".

An opening title informs us that all the incidents depicted in *Los Olvidados* are "founded on fact". No doubt events as dreadful as this did take place, and Bunuel could give chapter and verse for them. Unhappily, the treatment of human depravity in the more sensational Sunday newspapers is as "factual" and "objective" as Rio, but it has nothing to do with art.

The idea of *Secret People*, it appears, first came to Thorold Dickinson from a newspaper item he came upon in 1940: a woman working for the I.R.A. in Liverpool had a change of heart, informed against her husband, was given police protection to escape the vengeance of her former confederates, and survived only at the cost of changing her face and assuming a new identity for life. The theme, then, as it is described in Lindsay Anderson's book, "Making a Film," was "the effect of public violence on the private conscience of a worker for an illegal political organisation."

In subject, but not in approach, *Secret People* has affinities with a film by John Huston, *We Were Strangers*, which described a group of Mexican conspirators in the 30's and their attempt to assassinate a dictator. Huston's film settled the question of public violence—and private conscience—without much argument, showed the heroine joining the movement because her brother had been shot down by the dictator's police and because she was attracted to the leader of the group, and kept its emphasis on action. *Secret People* begins its discussion of conscience at about the same dramatic point and continues it to the end. Maria, a refugee with her sister in London during the 30's, from an unspecified European fascist country, has lost her father under the dictatorship; she has also been in love with Louis, an underground revolutionary. She meets him again in Paris after a separation of seven years and finds he is continuing the work. The story that excitingly follows is concerned with the corrupting effect of violence in general—the underground movement itself dedicated to the brutal methods of the dictator it is fighting against—and in particular, on Louis and Maria.

Louis is at first disgusted by the thuggery of one of his confederates, but by the end he subscribes to it. The character is in many ways similar to the Fenner (John Garfield) of *We Were Strangers*, except that *Secret People* does not take a romantic view of him. It is on Maria, though, that the main emphasis falls. Persuaded by Louis to carry a bomb to a party the dictator is attending on a visit to London, she witnesses the death of a young waitress when the plan misfires. She is horrified at the sacrifice of an innocent life, and the movement's complete indifference. The consequences—her interrogation by the movement and its attempts to intimidate her, her confession to Scotland Yard, her injury in a battle between the conspirators and the police, her recovery and

adoption of a new identity—point cumulatively to the impossibility of escape. She finds Louis attempting to involve her sister, declares herself, is stabbed, and the film closes on the words of a letter written by her father, in which he quotes Auden: “We must love one another or die.”

Secret People concentrates its purpose on the two figures of Maria and Louis, whose personal drama expresses the divided human reaction to violence: the horror and guilt of a quick, idealistic nature, and the hardening of a revolutionary dominated by the means and losing sight of the end. The fact that Maria loves Louis at first binds them and their cause together, then emphasises the gulf between them. This is the core of the film—and some tense, imaginative handling, combined with the performances of Valentina Cortese and Serge Reggiani, make it extremely gripping, in spite of obvious lapses in writing and continuity. It creates its impact because its director cares greatly about the subject and also happens to be a film-maker of original style. There are times—the opening quarter of an hour and the last ten minutes particularly—when this style cannot liberate itself from indifferent scripting, but the main parts of the story, from the meeting of Louis and Maria in Paris to the bomb explosion when the conspirators are being rounded up, are excitingly, at moments brilliantly told. The most powerful scenes occur in the middle of the film: Louis’ sudden request to Maria that she carry the bomb, the evening party, ingeniously and tellingly enclosed in flashback, Maria’s confrontation, spotlight in a darkened room, by the movement, her visit to Scotland Yard, all this is intensely real, a compelling description of Maria’s growing confusion and hysteria and a vivid piece of story-telling.

“To me the sound film,” Thorold Dickinson wrote in this magazine, “like the silent film, is still a matter of piece of film which have to be laid together, and which in doing so create a work which is more than the sum of the elements inherent in the individual strips of celluloid.” The narrative of *Secret People* often gains its tension from the skill, the invention, with which its sequence are pieced together; the use of close-ups in the scene when Louis persuades Maria to carry the bomb, for example, is finely planned for dramatic emphasis—and again the repeated close shots of Maria at the party, at which there is also a notable effect of sound. The sudden panic-stricken outcry coincides with a cut to a low-angle shot of Maria as the bomb explodes. (Earlier, after Louis and Maria have been photographed in a Paris nightclub, the “freezing” of the image, dissolving to a shot of the photograph on a table in Louis’ lodging, accompanied by the ominous tick of an alarm clock, is equally brilliant.) The film is full of beautifully shot and timed little scenes—Nora, Maria’s sister, rushing out of the house after being summoned to her audition; the audition itself; and the whole nightclub sequence.

A mark of Dickinson’s style is the combination of this strong editing technique with a talent for intricate, expressive camera movements—in *Secret People* one remembers particularly the long

pan, from Maria’s point of view in the car going off to the party, past the row of faces smiling goodbye, moving finally to the chauffeur’s reflection in the driving mirror; and the gradual movement as Louis and Maria descend the stairs while police are rounding up the conspirators in the café. This style seems to have developed most luxuriously in his costume pictures, above all *Queen of Spades*, where the decor played a positive dramatic part; and in *Secret People*, curiously, the effect most reminiscent of the earlier film—the long, daringly conceived shot of Nora in the ballet towards the end—is the one that seems dramatically misplaced.

For much of the film, then, the style, the attack, the evident emotional conviction, are self-sustaining. What surprises is that these qualities are seldom matched in the script. The writing itself contains little more than outlines—outlines of narrative, outlines of Maria and Louis (less than that with some minor characters)—and the continuity is at times unnecessarily obscure. The dialogue is at best serviceable and at worst inept. In the case of Maria and Louis, the playing provides an extra depth and interest, but it cannot always disguise the bareness of much that they are given to say to each other. Dickinson and Wilhelm have mapped out the stages of Maria’s story convincingly but, so far as words go, without any of the persuasive techniques of imagination. It is strange for a film with such a subject and such a style to contain hardly a line of memorable dialogue, and the conception of several minor characters is, alternately, conventional or caricatured.

There are three sequences, in fact, when the lack of support in the script is almost crippling. In the first quarter of an hour, one should have learned more about Maria herself, and had some hint of Louis, which is simply a matter of dialogue being communicative rather than uncommunicative. As it is, the film opens tentatively and without much impact. When the conspirators interrogate Maria, their views on the problem of violence and assassination could have been more interestingly expressed, and thereby strengthened the film’s intellectual grasp; and, finally, the last scenes lose tragedy through some stilted lines and action. Lack of structure is here most evident too; after the second bomb explosion, the task of creating and maintaining a completely new tension is almost insuperable, and perhaps, from the moment Maria wakes in hospital, the rest should have been conceived more as an epilogue, a swift, compressed glimpse of her last and most desperate attempt to escape.

Its particular balance of power makes *Secret People* a fascinating example of what might be called the director’s cinema; a film drawing its strength from narrative style, from the creation and structure of its images. That it succeeds about two-thirds of the way is a tribute to its director’s talent—in some ways, it seems to me, the most interesting talent in British films at the moment—and also locates quite clearly the missing third in the writing. In most films the script, for good or ill, counts for at least half, and in *Secret People* it might well have done so without the performances

One of the most exciting new films to reach London recently is the Japanese “Rasho Mon” (“In the Woods”), prizewinner at the 1951 Venice Festival. The story is of a brigand’s rape of a woman and murder of her husband. Related from three different viewpoints, the conflicting views of the situation lead to reflections on the nature of truth. This scene is of the capture of the bandit





James Mason as the Albanian valet-spy of "Five Fingers". His performance is the chief distinction of an intriguing story of which writer (Michael Wilson) and director (Joseph Mankiewicz) have made surprisingly little

of Cortesa and Reggiani. Cortesa's eager, passionate playing makes real and understandable the plight of Maria, her confused motives—the memory of her father, her love for Louis, a natural idealism—and her sudden revulsion. To a sketchier part, Reggiani brings first an essential dynamic quality. He is the kind of actor whose personality immediately suggests depth and complexities, and he presents the divided Louis with a mysterious authority, neither sympathetic nor unsympathetic, which is exactly right. The rest, apart from Irene Worth's outstanding portrait of the police-woman, and Audrey Hepburn's Nora, which is adequate, have not a great deal to do; the centre of *Secret People* is narrow, almost exclusive. What exists outside Maria and Louis is not very important, not always very interesting, and the rhythm emphasises this, slowing only to concentrate on one or other of the protagonists. *Secret People*, in fact, is a fine example of the illogical power of the artist. Its faults would have finished many a film, but its virtues have the absorbing, embracing power—which is something not primarily to analyse, but to respond to—of an artist's imagination.

VIVA ZAPATA!

Reviewed by Catherine de la Roche

Emiliano Zapata, a Mestizo tenant-farmer in South Mexico, became a general in the civil wars of 1911-19. His cause was land for the Indian. Of all the revolutionary leaders, he alone took nothing for himself. The Zapatistas did their share of pillaging, though less cruelly than the followers of Villa and other bandits. But Zapata himself was known for his integrity, and became a legendary hero, personifying the cherished ideals of the peons.

In essence, that is how he has been portrayed in *Viva Zapata!* If nevertheless the portrait is sometimes out of focus, this is not (as has been suggested elsewhere) because his story has been bowdlerised, but because of the ideological anachronisms introduced into it. The inevitable result is lack of unity in a film, much of which looks right, thanks to Elia Kazan's direction and Joe Macdonald's photography, and sounds wrong owing to John Steinbeck's screenplay, which remains confusing even after reference to Mexican history.

It consists of episodes taken apparently at random from the chaos of the revolution. Some have the vividness and immediacy of Kazan's style at its best: the Indian villagers being led by Zapata to survey the land that has been taken from them under the Diaz dictatorship; the illiterate Zapata being taught to read by his bride on their wedding night; the treacherous attack on

the Zapatistas after they had disarmed in the square of Avala; the assassination of President Madero at night in the blinding glare of motor-car headlights. But others are pretentiously contrived to represent Zapata's simple cause, *Tierra y Libertad*, in terms of present day clichés about democracy and dictatorship. Not only does this throw the picture out of its period, it reduces the elaborately made points (mainly, that power corrupts) to mere banality.

The false notes do not always predominate. It is easy to see why Darryl Zanuck was tempted to return to the pages of Mexican history which had been superficially brought to the screen in *Viva Villa* (1934), and to shift the emphasis on to the more significant of the two leaders. Zapata is both a historical and a legendary figure of immense fascination. Accordingly some of his scenes, especially those with the peasants and in the mountains, have a folklore quality, and others—his arrest, for instance—the terseness of photo-journalism. Both treatments are appropriate and, remembered separately, many of the scenes are very fine. The pity is that there is no assurance in the transitions from one manner to the other, no unifying style.

Some of the most famous episodes (though, incomprehensibly, not his spectacular recital, in a mountain hut, of the Plan of Avala) and legendary motifs have been recreated with painstaking accuracy: the monstrously theatrical scene of his death, for example, when he was treacherously ushered into a hacienda with a flourish of bugles and shot by a salvo from the rifles of an entire regiment concealed in the building; and, of course, there is his white horse, which according to innumerable ballads still roams the mountains of Morelos, where Zapata was always invincible. It is significant that the final scenes, like the equally effective earlier one of Zapata's rescue after his arrest, rely hardly at all on Steinbeck's dialogue.

Marlon Brando gives a fine, deeply felt performance as Zapata. In most scenes he transforms himself into the simple, courteous, persistent Mestizo completely—but not in all; powerful though it is, of his three impressive screen roles this is probably the least brilliant. But so, in all conscience, is the dialogue he is required to put over. There is a lot of good acting in the film, notably Harold Gordon's haunting portrayal of the weak, sincere and hopelessly ineffective Madero. It is, in short, a failure to see for the many good things loosely assembled in it.

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

Reviewed by Karel Reisz

The Aldwych Theatre production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, following on John Gielgud's production of *The Glass Menagerie*, revealed Tennessee Williams as a dramatist of highly sensitive and individual gifts, choosing to express his themes of disenchantment in the American South through bold melodrama and intense, poetic dialogue. This blend of qualities was further evidence of a native American style of theatre which has evolved in recent years and for which there has been no equivalent here: Elia Kazan's production of *Death of a Salesman* showed it at its slickest; Menotti's *The Consul* at its most formalised. Their two notable qualities were an immense drive and efficiency of presentation (which *Streetcar* at the Aldwych fatally lacked) and an insistence on a harsh, class-conscious realism achieved at the expense of any decorative visual qualities. Now Kazan's film of *Streetcar* gives one of the first opportunities to see what can be done with the style in the cinema.

Tennessee Williams' play chronicles the last stages in the dispersal of a fading Southern belle's illusions. Blanche Dubois, with tattered, incongruously dainty finery, a soiled reputation, and memories of a genteel Southern childhood, arrives penniless in New Orleans to take refuge in her sister's home. She finds Stella living contentedly in a dirty workers' tenement house, married to Stanley Kowalski, a gaudy, brashly sensual "Polack." Sensing an enemy from an alien world, Stanley progressively shatters Blanche's remaining illusions, uncovers her past and in the climactic scene rapes her, causing her final degradation in insanity. Behind this personal drama there develops the conflict of values which Tennessee Williams has explored elsewhere: the clash between the young and the old; the sordidly real and the magically bogus; between the precarious dignity of Stanley's primitive sensual nature and Blanche's equally vulnerable refinement.

BLANCHE: I don't want realism . . . I'll tell you what I want. Magic! (MITCH laughs). Yes, yes, Magic! I try to give that to people. I misrepresent things to them. I don't tell the truth, I tell what ought to be the truth. And if that is sinful, then let me be damned for it!—Don't turn the light on!

MITCH crosses to the switch. He turns the light on and stares at her. She cries out and covers her face.

The style does not transplant readily to the screen. Tennessee Williams' script, like his compromised adaptation of *The Glass Menagerie*, changes little of the original. All the usual objections to stage adaptations apply; there is too much talk, too little broad action, and the contrived unnecessary excursions into exterior sets merely break up the narrative's rhythm—the brief scene with Stanley at the factory seems particularly arbitrary. Over and above this, there is a discrepancy between the director's handling and the quality of the writing, which somehow throws all the larger effects out of gear. Staged with the minute attention to details of movement and gesture that one expects from Kazan, the creation of the images is surprisingly unadventurous. Most of the action is caught between medium and close shot—roughly from bosom upwards—and gives much too passive a record for scenes conceived on the large dramatic scale. In the absence of a real visual style, the camera, getting in among the players, merely destroys that automatic sense of one remove one inevitably experiences in the theatre, and achieves a literal, fussy and sweaty realism which jars against the stylised dialogue. Viewed from close to, the actors seem too often to be "making speeches." Elsewhere, attempts at modifying the material for the screen weaken the effects.

The recurring metaphor of the blind Mexican flower-woman, so apt on the stage, appears as an unconvincingly planted intrusion. The constantly jangling "blue piano" has, for some mysterious reason, been replaced by an orchestra. The isolated attempts to summon Blanche's emotions through a disembodied voice from the past are made too briefly to establish an acceptable convention—and, besides, anchor emotions which were more effective as allusions. There seems to be no instance where the play's effects have been enhanced, and the ambiguous new ending, which allows Stella to leave Stanley, gives a senselessly destructive twist.

Vivien Leigh's Blanche is a polished, professional performance, over-calculated, lacking inner compulsion. Tennessee Williams has been unfortunate in having three English actresses, Vivien Leigh, Gertrude Lawrence and Margaret Johnston, play his Southern belles (casting so extraordinary one almost fears lest Celia Johnson may one day be given *Mrs. Stone*). Marlon Brando creates a figure of frightening power, wonderfully enlarged by his genuinely affecting moments of tender, infantile charm.

SHADOW IN THE SKY and BRANDY FOR THE PARSON Reviewed by Gavin Lambert

These two films are fruitful examples of American and British low-budget production, particularly of material adjusted to resources. The first (now on floating release) comes from M.G.M., where Dore Schary has for several years encouraged this kind of film-making, and the second from Group 3, the company set up last year by the Film Finance Corporation to promote new talent on modestly unconventional subjects.

Shadow in the Sky is the story of an ex-marine, played with touching directness and understanding by Ralph Meeker, who is left after the war with bouts of recurrent insanity. The attacks are associated with rain; he fought in a grim Pacific campaign and saved a friend's life during days of rain, and rain takes his mind back to it. His sister is happily married, and has two children; she and her husband are frightened to give him a home, so he is left in hospital. The story develops on two levels—the conscience-stricken uncertainty of his sister about not helping him, the painful tensions when she finally does; and the marine's working out of his own problem, his tormented relationship with a girl friend. A subject one is instinctively suspicious of, these days, but one which, through Ben Maddow's thoughtful, sensitive script, some sympathetic handling and excellent performances, becomes human and affecting.

For once pathological experiences are treated with a complete absence of sensationalism, and for the most part without glibness. Only in the ending itself—the marine's self-cure by reliving his experiences and "understanding" them—does a facile oversimplification intrude, but though it flaws the film it does not invalidate the rest of it. The director is Fred M. Wilcox, whose touch is not very positive, but he clearly respects the material, which is unusually well written, handles the main scenes with a pleasant intimacy, and concentrates on the characters. Ralph Meeker's is the most notable performance, but Jean Hagen, as the

girl friend, and Nancy Davis and James Whitmore, as the sister and her husband, are all admirable.

Brandy for the Parson is the second Group 3 production, on a level altogether different from the first, John Baxter's sadly conventional and old-fashioned *Judgment Deferred*. Produced by Grierson, directed by John Eldridge, who worked formerly in documentary (*Waverley Steps*, *Three Dawns to Sydney*), it is a bright, leisurely, enjoyable little comedy about a couple of holiday-makers (James Donald and Jean Lodge) who are involved, with an engaging spiv (Kenneth More) smuggling brandy from France and delivering it to a wine merchant of high repute in St. James's. The script, by Walter Meade and Geoffrey Orme, from a Geoffrey Household story, could have been livelier in its dialogue, but the film as a whole has a freshness and vitality to carry it pleasingly through. The situations are fun, the Customs Inspector's pursuit of the young couple as they trudge cross-country from Dorset to London with the kegs strapped to performing ponies bought from a bankrupt circus, allows for several diverting incidents, and a note of sophisticated farce is consistently maintained. One remembers particularly the farmer who, having bought the ponies unaware of their origin, comes hopefully into the field where they are browsing, to be greeted by the whole row of them pirouetting on their hind legs. Location work (by Martin Curtis) is outstanding, even if it does encourage the director to indulge in too many landscapes and set his figures in long shot against the sky, and there is good acting by James Donald and Kenneth More, by Michael Trubshawe as an eccentric gentleman farmer, and Charles Hawtrey as a remarkably dim-witted driver of a laundry van, unwillingly involved in the venture.

One shouldn't draw comparisons between two groups of such widely differing experience—*Shadow in the Sky*, undoubtedly the more substantial film, is the latest result of a policy of several years' standing, *Brandy for the Parson* the second of a new unit with fewer resources. But both films have an engaging intimacy and an unostentatious directness that are refreshing.

RICHER THAN THE EARTH and THE WELL

Reviewed by Penelope Houston

Fashions change rapidly in the cinema, and the opening shot of Main Street or the Los Angeles police station, the insistent "this is a true story" as obligatory introduction to an investigation of crime or social injustice already seems dated. *The Whistle at Eaton Falls* (Columbia)—the film's English title is rhetorical and not particularly apposite—shows Louis de Rochemont's continued taste both for the style and for an austere New England small town setting.

The problem here is one of labour-management relations, and the exposition at least does not evade its issues. The main source



"Shadow in the Sky." Jean Hagen, Ralph Meeker



Brandy for the Parson

of employment at Eaton Falls is a small plastics factory, well-run, with a record free from labour troubles. The employers, however, can continue in business only by cutting costs, and can cut costs only by introducing labour-saving machinery: this brings a head-on clash with the Union. By a twist comparable to that in *Lost Boundaries*, which ranged the white inhabitants of the town against their doctor, revealed as a Negro, the Union leader (Lloyd Bridges) becomes factory manager. His attempts to satisfy both sides; his reluctant acceptance of the only solution—to lay off workers; the disillusionment of his friends: all this the narrative develops sensibly and fairly, in a manner considerably more solemn than that of the British *Chance of a Lifetime*. Simple and good-humoured as Bernard Miles' film was, it perhaps could afford to assume a greater sophistication in the audience and so to appear less didactic.

The ingenuity with which American problem pictures conjure a happy ending out of an impasse continually surprises. Having pointed out that both labour and management have their problems and, in a short but journalistically telling sequence, demonstrated the effect of the factory shut-down on the community, the film has shot its bolt. The situation is resolved in a way typical of America and of the problem picture. "Know how" wins the day; a newly invented gadget makes it possible to undercut competitors' prices; the factory is saved. There is, however, a curious last-minute plot extension. A business rival, out to close the factory, allies himself with an ingenuous (or treacherous?) union man. This character, who opposes "the bosses" as a general principle, seems to represent old-style radicalism rather than Communism. But the implication that extreme labour is too gullible to understand its own interests appears somewhat strange in a film determined, on the whole, to see the best of both sides.

The Whistle at Eaton Falls has its limitations both in technique and in theory. It is a good deal better made, thanks to Robert Siodmak's more fluent and coherent narrative style, than *Lost Boundaries*. The treatment, however, tends to flatness and the photography is poor. The playing is natural and restrained, with Lloyd Bridges giving a purposeful performance as the union man turned boss and Dorothy Gish bringing presence and distinction to a small part as his employer.

In content, the film suffers from the well-intentioned confusion which is the traditional weakness of the problem picture. The glib optimism of the solution, effected with a smooth changing of gears which disguises the fact that the film is no longer travelling quite the same road, is unacceptable. Labour problems are not as simple as this.

It is some distance from de Rochemont's restrained and serious sociological reportage to *The Well*, made for Cardinal Pictures by Leo Popkin and Russell Rouse (directors) and Clarence Green (scriptwriter) and released by United Artists. This film illustrates a different kind of confusion. A small Negro girl disappears on her way to school and a white man is suspected of being involved. The town's Negro population, sure that the police will not act as forcefully as they would were the situation reversed, becomes sullen and aggressive. The whites retaliate, rumours spread, and soon a full-scale race riot builds up. Then the child is found to have fallen down a well (this part of the story comes from an incident in California a year or so ago) and the rioters abandon their battle to join in the rescue.

The Well provides action of two almost foolproof kinds: high pitched mob violence and the race-against-time rescue work. Rough and ready script construction, a rather incoherent style and some inexperienced playing (though the major parts are well managed by Richard Rober, Henry Morgan and Barry Kelly) are compensated for by an aggressive vitality.

The problem, however, is to gauge the sincerity of the film's intentions and, as with *The Sound of Fury*, one cannot help regarding these with a certain suspicion. It is true that *The Well* has the merit of showing the Negro problem, as it were, in reverse. But the plot is mechanical in the extreme, the riot (in a town

which, we are told, has never had any race trouble) flares up too quickly, the shift from savagery to rescue work is improbably abrupt, and one cannot accept the implied conclusion that the way in which whites and Negroes work together in emergency cancels out the appalling brutality of a few hours before. The film in effect splits in half down the middle, and the two parts are artificially spliced together. Films dealing with violence are by their nature dangerous. A work of the stature of *Intruder in the Dust* is one thing; the confecting of a sensationally melodramatic situation is another, and *The Well* is not above reproach in this.

IN BRIEF

THE AFRICAN QUEEN (*Romulus*). This is a tall story—the kind that must be true to be believed. The conjunction of the prudish spinster and the gin-swilling rough diamond on the latter's flat-bottomed tug moving down a tropical river promises—one doesn't know what; and when the lady in her 1914 clothes and umbrella turns out to have a will of steel hitherto concentrated on the propagation of the Gospel, we willingly accept her dominance over the bewildered Charlie. At a pinch, too, we can accept her stout resolve to avenge her brother's death and contribute to the war effort by blowing up a German gunboat. But later events plunge the couple into a world increasingly Swiss Family Robinson; at some point in the adaptation of C. S. Forester's novel a spirit of hilarity seems to have overwhelmed writers and director. The novel, apart from a more plausible ending, had a realistic treatment that contrived to make its other improbabilities convincing, but John Huston's film wavers disconcertingly and a little aimlessly between life and fairy tale. Both Katharine Hepburn and Humphrey Bogart give brilliant performances, of such detail and subtlety that it comes as a shock, halfway through, to recognise how far they have escaped from reality. Nothing in the cinema is more charming than fantasy, more absorbing that character in action, more exciting than the pursuit of adventure. *The African Queen* has something of each of these qualities, but the difficult problem of resolving them into a satisfactory whole has not altogether been surmounted.—Clarissa Bowen.

MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL (*Film Traders*). "An experiment," T. S. Eliot has remarked, "from the point of view of the producer and that of the author of the text", George Hoellering's screen version provides a curious ordeal for the audience. On the credit side, there is the elaborately scaled sound of the chorus speaking by the women of Canterbury, which has some beautiful and striking effects; one or two admirable additions (the game of chess with the First Tempter, Mr. Eliot's expressive voice as the invisible Fourth); David Ward's presentation of the First Tempter and Niall MacGinnis' Herald (with a successfully extended speech); the fine handling of the first chorus as the women enter the cathedral; and the generally sensitive if at times monotonous speaking of the verse. On the debit side, the conception as a whole seems portentous and uncertain. The play's classical, formal structure has been destroyed, without anything to replace it—there seems no reason why the film should be so much longer in performance than the play; the women of Canterbury are made to over-participate in the action, with the result that their function as chorus, from a formal point of view, is blurred; the film lacks dramatic flow and shape, while the camera slides indeterminately back and forth, stops at irrelevant pieces of statuary, and the cutting is lax; the author has written a new opening scene which further destroys the original unity without adding much; the truncation—in line with the director's avoidance of most of the irony in the text—of the Knights' speeches at the end destroys the point of this epilogue; one of the most beautiful and poetic scenes in the play is marred by the imposed sound of a baby screaming; and the music is distressingly vulgar. Resources, in fact, are seldom equal to intentions, however praiseworthy these may be.—Gavin Lambert.



IN THE SCRIPT

A Streetcar Named Desire



In the last issue of SIGHT AND SOUND, the extract from the shooting script of a contemporary film, *Encore*, showed a screenwriter expanding one paragraph of Somerset Maugham to ten minutes of screen time. Here the adaptation is from a play; the author, Tennessee Williams, also worked on the film version. The sequence chosen is from the final scene, in which Blanche du Bois, in a state between bewilderment and madness after her rape by Stanley, is taken off to an asylum by a Strange Man and a Strange Woman (a doctor and a matron). At first she confuses these with a former beau, Shep Huntleigh, whom she imagines has invited her to go on a cruise.

Kazan's shooting script is completely detailed for dialogue and movement of characters, but not for camera set-ups and movement. Only the basic cuts are indicated, the scenes being individually broken up in shooting. The final script gives only 128 separate shots; the completed film, of course, contains more than double this number.

Up to the last few moments, the screenplay follows the original very closely. Hardly a word of dialogue is changed. Apart from Tennessee Williams' expressive stage devices, such as the use of shadows and grotesque reflections on the walls round Blanche at climactic moments, which are omitted in the film, the major departure from the original here is in the ending itself. Stella suddenly decides to leave her husband Stanley; in the play, they are characteristically reconciled.

The actual details of the ending itself presented a problem. We print here two slightly different versions, the first being a revision (about two months' later) of the second. In addition, a final note attached to the script indicates the various possibilities seen by Kazan and Tennessee Williams. Finally, for comparison, we print the ending of the play.

Credits of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. An Elia Kazan Production. Produced by Charles K. Feldman. Directed by Elia Kazan. Adaptation by Oscar Saul. Screenplay by Tennessee Williams. With Vivien Leigh as Blanche, Marlon Brando as Steve, Kim Hunter as Stella, Karl Malden as Mitch. We are grateful to Charles K. Feldman Enterprises and to Warner Bros. for permission to reprint extracts from the shooting script.

116. BEDROOM.

BLANCHE :

It is for me, then ! Is it the gentleman I was expecting from Dallas ?

EUNICE (looking at Stella) :

I think it is, Blanche.

BLANCHE :

I'm not quite ready.

STELLA (to Eunice) :

Ask him to wait outside.

(to Blanche) :

Everything packed ?

BLANCHE :

My silver toilet articles are still out.

Stella hurries to get them, puts them in a hatbox, closes it.

Eunice returns to living room.

117. LIVING ROOM.

Eunice nods to Stanley.

STANLEY (turns to Doctor) :

She'll be here in a minute.

Doctor nods, turns to Strange Woman and tells her the same thing.

118. BEDROOM.

Eunice is re-entering.

EUNICE :

They're waiting in front of the house.

BLANCHE :

They ? Who's they ?

EUNICE :

There's a lady with him.

BLANCHE :

I can't imagine who this "lady" could be !

(Stella averts her eyes.)

How is she dressed ?

EUNICE :

Just — just a sort of plain-tailored outfit.

BLANCHE :

Possibly she's —

(Her voice dies out nervously)



STELLA :

Shall we go, Blanche ?

BLANCHE :

Yes.

They start out of bedroom, carrying bags.

BLANCHE :

Must we go through that room ?

STELLA :

I will go with you.

BLANCHE :

How do I look ?

STELLA :

Lovely !

EUNICE (echoing) :

Lovely !

Blanche starts into living room, Stella follows. Eunice is passed, then follows.

119. LIVING ROOM.

BLANCHE (to men at table) :

Now, please don't get up. I'm only passing through.

(Goes to door.)

STRANGE MAN :

How do you do?

BLANCHE (steps onto porch—stares at Strange Man) :

You are not the gentleman I was expecting.

(To Stella.) :

That man isn't Shep Huntleigh!

Stella turns quickly into Eunice's arms. Blanche runs into flat. Doctor enters living room, motioning Strange Woman, who also enters.

STANLEY (as Blanche passes him) :

Did you forget something.

BLANCHE (shrilly, running into bedroom) :

Yes, Yes, I forgot something!

Strange Man has stepped into room. Stands at door. Strange Woman crosses through living room into bedroom.



120. BEDROOM.

STRANGE WOMAN (confronting Blanche) :

Hello, Blanche.

STANLEY'S VOICE (o.s.) :

She says she forgot something.

STRANGE WOMAN :

That's all right.

Stanley enters bedroom.

121. C. U. STANLEY. BEDROOM.

STANLEY (very close, seen from Blanche's angle) :

What did you forget, Blanche?

122. MEDIUM SHOT.

BLANCHE :

I — I —

STRANGE WOMAN :

It don't matter. We can pick it up later.

STANLEY :

Sure, we can send it along with the trunk.

BLANCHE (retreating) :

I don't know you! I don't know you! I want to be — left alone — please!

STRANGE WOMAN :

Now, Blanche!

VOICES (echoing and re-echoing) :

Now, Blanche! Now, Blanche! Now, Blanche!

STANLEY :

You left nothing here but spilt talcum and old empty perfume bottles, unless it's the lantern you want to take with you.

(He tears the lantern off the light bulb.)

You want the lantern?

Blanche cries out, grabs lantern. Strange Woman steps boldly towards her. Blanche screams and tries to break past the strange woman. Strange Woman catches her arm. Blanche turns and wildly scratches at the Woman, who pinions her arms, expertly. Blanche falls, the Woman kneels beside her, holding her.

CUT TO :

123. KITCHEN. STELLA AND EUNICE. EUNICE IS HOLDING HER.

STELLA :

Eunice, don't let them do that to her! Don't let them hurt her! What are they doing?

(Tries to go toward bedroom.)

EUNICE :

No, honey. Stay here. Don't go in there. Don't look.

Mitch springs at Stanley who is standing in the doorway between the two rooms.

MITCH :

You! You done this!

CUT TO :

124. BEDROOM. THE FIGHT SEEN FROM THE OTHER SIDE.

STANLEY :

Quit the blubber!

MITCH :

I'll kill you.

STANLEY :

Hold this bonehead!

STEVE :

Stop it, Mitch.

PABLO :

Yeah. Take it easy.

Pablo and Steve pull Mitch off Stan and out of sight.

STANLEY :

I tell you it ain't true what she said! She asked for some rough house! I gave her some rough house!

The Strange Man comes into the shot and kneels beside the prostrate Blanche. The Woman is still holding her.

STRANGE WOMAN :

These finger-nails will have to be trimmed. Jacket, Doctor?

STRANGE MAN :

Not unless necessary.

(He kneels close to Blanche.)

Miss Du Bois —

BLANCHE :

Please —

STRANGE MAN :

It won't be necessary.

BLANCHE (faintly) :

Ask her to let go of me.

STRANGE MAN (to the Woman) :

Yes — let go.

The Woman releases Blanche then rises. Blanche extends her hands. The man raises her up. He takes off his hat and smiles at her. She looks at him, wavering at first, then smiling, as she would at a new beau.

BLANCHE :

Whoever you are — I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.



Blanche comes out of the house on the doctor's arm. She walks by Stella who is on the porch, then past Stanley and out of Camera . . . Stella goes to follow her. Stanley intercepts her and says . . .

STANLEY :

Come on honey . . .

STELLA (shrinking from him) :

Don't you touch me. Don't you ever touch me again . . .

125. ON THE STREET.

Blanche gets into the car with the doctor. It drives off and we pan with it holding on the courtyard gate—Stella appears there looking after the car.

126. HIGH SHOT. THE STREET.

Blanche's car drives around the corner and disappears.

127. THE COURTYARD.

Stella is in tears . . . she goes back slowly towards the baby carriage, throws back the netting and picks up the infant . . . Then she starts back into her home. We hear O.S.

STANLEY (O.S.) :

Stella!

His tone is harsh and demanding. It is reminiscent (in the reading) of the cry he gave at the bottom of the steps at the end of the poker night.

Stella stops. Stanley is heard again from inside the house . . . more demanding.

STANLEY :

Stella!!

Stella looks down at the infant. Crying, she whispers

What follows is an earlier draft of scenes 124-128. In fact, neither ending as it stands appears in the finished film, which closes not on a shot of the car carrying Blanche away, but on Stanley calling hopelessly after Stella as she mounts the stairs to Eunice's apartment, "Stella! Stella!" The scene between Blanche and the Doctor in the car does not appear either.

124. (cont.)

STELLA :

Blanche! Blanche! Blanche!

Blanche ignores her sister, waits for the Strange Man to catch up with her, walks with him down the steps, to the street, turns the corner of the building, out of sight. Stella hands the hatbox to the Strange Woman, who follows them.

125. VERANDAH. EUNICE COMES OUT OF THE HOUSE CARRYING THE BABY. STANLEY FOLLOWS HER.

STELLA :

What have I done to my sister? What have I done?

STANLEY :

Stella —

STELLA :

Eunice —

EUNICE :

You done the right thing. The only thing you could do. She couldn't stay here —

Stella looks at Stanley, almost with hate.

EUNICE :

There wasn't no other place for her to go.

She puts the baby in Stella's arms and goes out, leaving Stanley with Stella.

STANLEY :

Stella, baby —

Stella cringes away from him, and holding the baby tight marches up the stairs, away from him. He stands at the bottom.

STANLEY :

Stella —

She keeps on going.

126. STREET IN FRONT OF STELLA'S HOUSE AND BEYOND.

The play (published in Britain by John Lehmann) ends as follows. It should be remembered that it was designed for a composite set, representing the exterior of a two-storey building on a New Orleans street, with two flats, upstairs and down, visible. The author describes it as having a "raffish charm . . . A corresponding air is evoked by the music of Negro entertainers at a bar-room around the corner. In this part of New Orleans you are practically always just around the corner, or a few doors down the street, from a tinny piano being played with infatuated fluency of brown fingers. This "Blue Piano" expresses the spirit of the life which goes on here."

BLANCHE : Whoever you are — I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.

(The poker players stand back as BLANCHE and the DOCTOR cross the kitchen to the front door. She allows him to lead her as if she were blind. As they go out on the porch, STELLA cries out her sister's name from where she is crouched a few steps up on the stairs.)

STELLA : Blanche! Blanche! Blanche!

(BLANCHE walks on without turning, followed by the DOCTOR and the MATRON. They go around the corner of the building. EUNICE descends to STELLA and places the child in her arms. It is wrapped in a pale blue blanket. STELLA accepts the child, sobbingly. EUNICE continues downstairs and enters the kitchen where the men, except for STANLEY, are returning

to the child these words of promise and reassurance.

STELLA :

We're not going back in there. Not this time. We're never going back. Never, never back, never back again.

And then Stella turns and proceeds with strength and confidence up the stairs to Eunice's apartment.

128. STREET IN NEW ORLEANS.

At the back of the shot is the silhouette of the cathedral. The Cathedral bells that Blanche has referred to as the only clean thing in the quarter are ringing. The black car carrying Blanche is coming towards us, turns the corner and goes down a long dark New Orleans street. It is lost from view.

THE END.

Blanche, the Doctor, the Matron, are going down the street to where a very institutional-looking car is waiting, with the driver standing beside it. As they walk, the street lights go on, one by one. The *Varsouviana* fades behind them, as though it emanated from some fixed position which is being left in the past. They reach the car. The driver opens the doors. The Matron gets into the front seat. The Doctor puts out his hand to help Blanche into the back. At last she looks into his eyes. They are kindly. She smiles at him, almost coquettishly, as though he were a new beau. She puts her hand on his arm. He helps her into the car.

CUT TO :

127. STELLA ALONE ON THE VERANDAH.

(About eight feet and quickly zoom to Close Up.) Her eyes are full of tears. She is guilt-ridden and miserable. She is sobbing.

CUT TO :

128. NEW ORLEANS STREET.

(High Panoramic Shot, to be made in New Orleans.) Down a long, long, street, all by itself, goes the black car, riding away with Blanche.

THE END.

The following notes concerning the ending are attached to the shooting script.

WHAT FOR ENDING? AS ORIGINAL?
OR WITH STELLA GETTING BABY AND GOING OFF WITH EUNICE TO HER FLAT, LEAVING STANLEY?
CAR SCENE?
CAR GOING DOWN STREET—PANORAMIC SHOT?

silently to their places about the table. STANLEY has gone out on the porch and stands at the foot of the steps looking at STELLA.)

STANLEY : *(a bit uncertainly)* Stella?

(She sobs with inhuman abandon. There is something luxurious in her complete surrender to crying now that her sister is gone.)

STANLEY : *(voluptuously, soothingly)* : Now, honey. Now, love. Now, now, love. *(He kneels beside her and his fingers find the opening of her blouse)* Now, now, love. Now, love . . .

(The luxurious sobbing, the sensual murmur fade away under the swelling music of the "blue piano" and the muted trumpet.)

STEVE : This game is seven-card stud.

CURTAIN.

E.M.B. — G.P.O. Edgar Anstey

Thinking back to the Empire Marketing Board Film Unit in 1930 and the following years, the strongest memories are of a wide variety of problems and an even wider range of brave and sometimes foolhardy solutions. It was the ideal basis for the training of personnel and this John Grierson regarded as a main function of his Unit. I remember learning to work the projectors (as did every potential film-maker who joined the Unit) and I remember being sent with a De Vry camera to spend two half-days in St. James's Park so that I could learn by trial and error enough of the rudiments of camera work to go as director-cameraman on a six months' expedition to Labrador. This also meant some interior shooting with lights and on these occasions I combined the roles of producer, director, scriptwriter, cameraman, electrician and porter, all for £5 a week. Appalled by our squalor, certain members of the Unit (Messrs. Golightly and Davidson, I believe) once decided to spend the week-end re-painting the lavatories. Regular hours of work were unknown and the concept of overtime had not yet dawned. We were exploited but we were also the exploiters.

And what else was there to do but make films? Grierson was inclined to discourage such debilitating activities as reading or



Ordinary people: Pat Jackson's "Men in Danger" (GPO, 1939)

theatre-going on the ground that these necessary cultural matters should have been taken care of in earlier youth. If one were obliged to undertake some cultural revision, to re-read Plato or Trotsky, it must take place in secret and rather shamefully. In spite of this—or possibly because of it—the whole atmosphere of the Unit was the most stimulating I have ever experienced, with the creative work always socially purposive and never dilettante. I remember working at the bench alongside Grierson on the editing of *Industrial Britain* and concluding that his instinct for the value



Images of war. Jennings' "A Diary for Timothy" (Crown, 1945)

THE LIVING STORY

and function of a scene could only be explained by his genius. (I remember, too, the office boy who used to ask all our visitors to give him a penny and how this was not discovered until one day he mistook Stephen Tallents for a visitor.)

The main long-term purpose of our group devotions was to bring about the establishment of an official film unit which could directly serve the whole area of public needs and not be theoretically restricted either to the affairs of the Empire Marketing Board or the Post Office. With the establishment, much later, of the Crown Film Unit, our aim was achieved.

When I myself left the G.P.O. Unit, early in 1934, to set up the Shell Film Unit, I was adequately trained to design the premises, buy the equipment, choose the staff and produce the films. I was much less competent to cope with a solidly-founded administration bewildered by my tendency to treat each problem as if it were a dramatic emergency. In time I think I learned this last difficult lesson too, just as with the years Crown learned to live with its Treasury masters. Perhaps a question is whether they learned the lesson too well for their films or not well enough for their masters, or both. In this field conformism is a limited (and limiting) virtue. For the future the most important thing of all, more important even than the fate of Crown, is whether the public information service by film is to remain a public responsibility or to become instead a perquisite of private commerce.

THE COMPOSER AND CROWN

William Alwyn

What did Crown mean to the composer? Frankly, in one word, it meant opportunity. The days of the princely patron were long past; the independent spirit of a Beethoven could no longer submit cheerfully as Haydn did to a position of a servant in the house. From the romantic conception of starvation in a garret to the prosaic humdrum of teaching was the round choice of the aspiring young composer. Then "came the dawn"—films. Now at last there was opportunity—opportunity to exercise the craft of composition in a practical way—for the composer to earn as he composed—to live by his art.



Life in the Colonies. Basil Wright's "Cargo from Jamaica" (EMB, 1933)



Cavalcanti's "The First Days" (GPO, 1940): barrage balloons

"Documentary would photograph the living scene and the living story." John Grierson

British documentary in pictures, comment and reminiscence

That the film did not remain the happy hunting ground of the professional hacks is largely due to the enlightened policy of the pioneers of documentary. Here is a new art, said these brilliant young men, let us bring to it the youth and vitality of the budding composer; give him a new medium and see what happens.

What days they were! Walter Leigh with *Song of Ceylon*; Britten with *Night Mail*—the cutting-rooms were alive with new sounds and strange noises. My own career in documentary began by blowing a flute in the odd little orchestras that gathered for recording, but soon I was busy, stop-watch in hand, scribbling, conducting and playing—and always stimulated—stimulated by new ideas; a new approach; always the search for something new. We did not want the large lush orchestra of the feature film and in any case we could not afford it; we had to rely on our modest resources, which meant experiment, experiment and again experiment.

Have I given you an impression of the excitement I experienced in those early days of composing for documentary films? I hope I have. I believe that most good creative work comes out of this quality of excitement.

With the war came wider opportunities and larger resources but always excitement. The excitement of working on *Fires Were Started* with Humphrey Jennings and Ian Dalrymple—to spend one's nights as an air raid warden in the London Blitz and see it recaptured by day with humanity, pathos and truth in one of the most moving films of all time.

And with larger resources there came new conceptions. I believe it was largely due to Muir Mathieson, then the music director, that the brilliant idea of recruiting the experience of the great ones of music was launched. Vaughan Williams was asked to write the score for *Coastal Command* and Sir Arnold Bax for *Malta G.C.* Music in British films was given a new prestige throughout the world. But still experiment went on—the young, rising composer was not neglected. Muir Mathieson and I would often discuss together the possibilities and prospects of these new men and women (yes, women were not forgotten—Elizabeth Lutyens and Grace Williams are two who have made admirable contributions to documentary film music). I think Muir Mathieson and John Hollingsworth (who succeeded Mathieson

as music director of Crown) can say with just pride that not a single promising composer in this country has been overlooked in the search for new talent in film music.

The closing down of the Crown Film Unit is a major disaster not only for documentary films, but for the wealth of young musical talent who look to documentary for practical opportunity to exercise their skill and as a whetstone for their imagination. If a Phoenix is to rise then let me hope that it will be with re-kindled zest for experiment and ideas—the musician I know is eager to play his part.

CROWN FILM UNIT 1940-3

Ian Dalrymple

The Battle of Britain broke as I took over the Unit: I left on the end in North Africa. The period explains the product. As I saw it, apart from specialised use, Film had two war tasks—to inspire and to record.

I started aware of my shortcomings, in aesthetics, approach and integrity. Far from averting, this stimulated squabbles; and I had to learn that though I loathed and languished over them, they were rich red meat to the Unit.

I found a cadre of zealots, bursting with tradition, and talents. Cherished by Cavalcanti, they shouted, they wanted a Producer, while, I whispered, they needed a protagonist. Apart from my



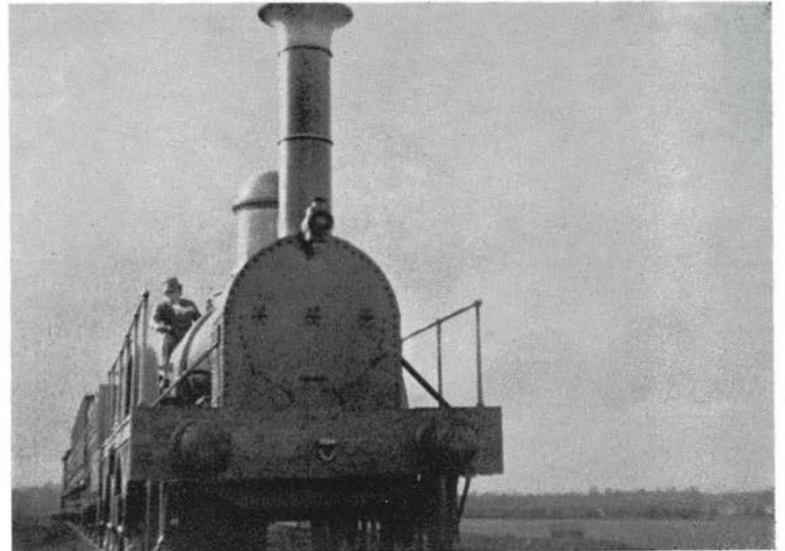
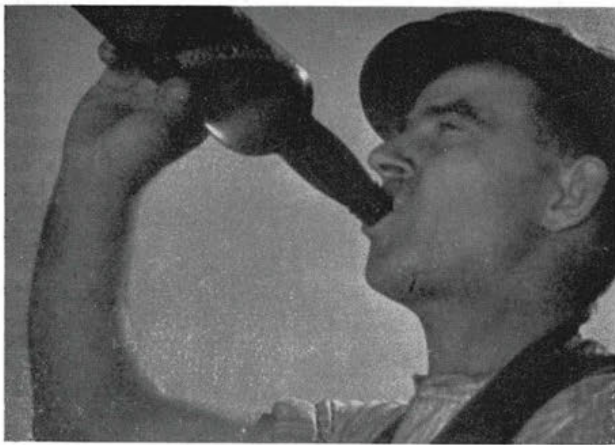
The child: Alexander Shaw's "The Children's Story" (GPO, 1938)

(diffident) inspection of scripts and rushes and cuts, they would make the films, I would fight the battles.

There were three schools in the Unit: Holmes, the man of observation, Jennings, the soul of inspiration, and Watt, the champion of perspiration. Under the less confusing name of Crown, all these could serve the Effort; and I found, too, an electrical youth called Lee: the charming, meandering, superbly "shooting" Ralph Elton: and, grandly brooding over his latest rushes, the cherubic genius of Jackson.



The arts. A ballet sequence from "Calendar of the Year" (GPO, 1938), directed by Evelyn Spice, music by Britten



Images and themes from British documentary. Views of the machine. Above: the train in "King's Stamp" (GPO, 1934) by William Coldstream, with music by Britten. Below: the ship, in Paul Rotha's "Shipyard" (GB Instructional, 1935)

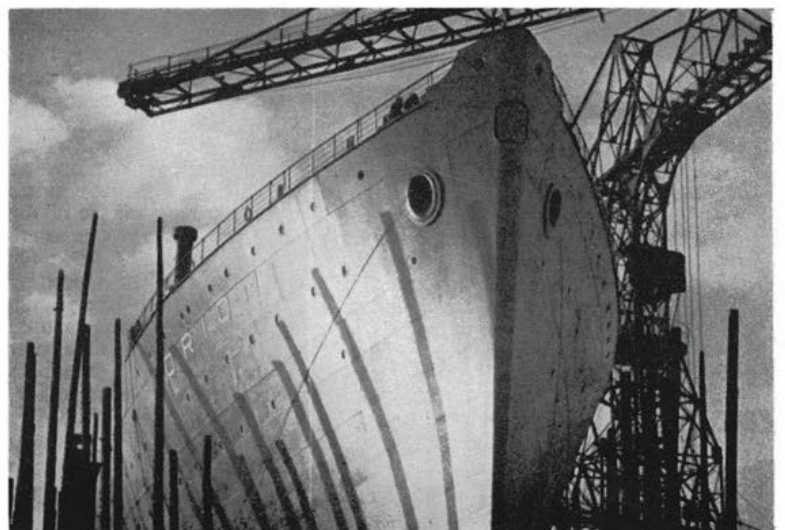
Men and jobs. Left: A railwayman in "Night Mail", by Basil Wright and Harry Watt (GPO, 1936). Below: A fisherman in "North Sea" (Harry Watt, GPO, 1938)

People. Humphrey Jennings' "Spare Time" (GPO, 1939): a band on a winter's day. Rodney Ackland's "The New School" (Crown, 1945)

Slowed down by bombs in Blackheath and Soho Square, I got shifted to Denham: and was there a row with the Unit! Later, allied with the Army and Royal Air Force, we won part of Pinewood from Food: and was there a worse one!

But, among many other films: Watt made *Front Line*, captained *London Can Take It*, and triumphed with *Target for Tonight*: Holmes finished *Merchant Seamen* and made *Ordinary People* and *Coastal Command* (still a Service Standby): Monck, the prototype of inter-Services films, *Wavell's 30,000*: Jackson, *Builders* and *Ferry Pilot*: Spiro, *We Sail at Midnight*: Lee, *The Pilot is Safe* and *Close Quarters*: and Humphrey, *Heart of Britain*, *Words for Battle*, *Listen to Britain*, and the immortal *Fires Were Started*.

Then, victories and the Services requisitioned the war, and the Ministry forbade me reconstruction and the peace. Thanks to the above, to Dora Wright, to MacAllister, Ken Cameron, Stone and their staffs: to Jones, Fowle, Pennington-Richards, Gamage, Catford and Densham: Mathieson and the composers: and to the championship of Beddington and the salesmanship of Bernstein, we did lots of work with few resources, and it was used. So Jackson made *Western Approaches*, and then I made off.



CROWN AND CANADA

James Beveridge

Late in 1939, when the Film Board began its work in Ottawa there were only a handful of native film technicians in the country. Grierson, Stuart Legg and Stanley Hawes, were the first producer-teachers from the British documentary group to undertake the recruitment and training of young Canadian film makers. The pace and range of their work at that time was comparable to that of the M.O.I. in London; with this difference, that films of wartime information were supplemented by a steady output of films about the regions and peoples of Canada.

While they were learning their own filmcraft, the Canadians at the same time fashioned a distribution network that borrowed freely from the local and regional distribution systems established in Britain.

Always, while the new group of Canadian film makers was gaining its own experience and authority, there was reference to the work from Crown and the M.O.I. Every few weeks a new group of M.O.I. films would arrive in Ottawa, and a packed screening room would watch the month-to-month course of development in wartime British documentary—*Ordinary People*, *Merchant Seamen*, *Fires Were Started*, *World of Plenty*, *Desert Victory*. The stimulus of these showings was of great importance to the Canadian group.

Personal contacts during and since the war, supplemented this connection with the British documentary programme. Basil Wright, Ken Cameron, Raymond Spottiswoode, Osmond Borradaile, and a number of others, came to Ottawa for varying terms of production work or consultation.

Last year a Canadian Royal Commission on the arts, letters and sciences investigated the status of the arts in Canada and the state of cultural life throughout the nation. The Commission rated the contribution of the National Film Board to these fields as one of primary importance. Now, with a new Film Act to strengthen and clarify its terms of reference, the Board enjoys increased public confidence and support, and a site in Montreal has been bought by the Canadian government for the future building of new studios and laboratories.

In all these developments to date, the continuity of the documentary film tradition and the connection with Britain have been maintained. Films from Crown have been shown widely throughout Canada. C.O.I. films are still distributed on National Film Board non-commercial circuits, all over the country. New films from Crown are still screened for attentive and interested groups of film makers in Ottawa. There is deep and widespread regret that no continuing supply of new documentaries, with their wealth of film craft to underline and illuminate British viewpoints, will be seen in future.

FURTHER NOTES

Denis Forman

Perhaps in conclusion it will be worth noting one or two things which have been left unsaid.

First of all, there are the mobile units. Since the middle war years the Ministry and, subsequently, the Central Office of Information have offered to government departments a balanced and self-contained film service. The government department would first of all discuss a project of the Films Division of the Central Office, and then—audiences, methods of distribution, timing and cost being decided—the film could be placed either with Crown or with an independent production company. Subsequently the film was offered for commercial distribution or, in most cases, to the Regional Films Officer, who arranged its exploitation through mobile units, 150 of which brought film programme into factories, clinics, village halls, throughout Great Britain. At the same time, copies were placed in the Central Film Library, and overseas versions often made for up to twenty countries. It was home non-theatrical distribution, however,

(continued on page 184)



"Bim", a film for children, made by "l'Ecran des Jeunes" in 1951, about an Algerian boy and his donkey. Written by Jacques Prevert and directed by Albert Lamorisse

CHILDREN'S FILMS

Janet Hills

SINCE the child began to be generally recognised as father to the man, grown-up people have spent a good deal of time discussing his paternal responsibilities. Less and less is being left to chance and a strong stomach; entertainment, as well as more formal education, is seen to have a vital share in moulding him, and doubtful companions like the cinema come under anxious scrutiny. Now UNESCO has caused the wisdom and bewilderments of various member countries to be assembled in a solid publication, *Le Film Récréatif pour Spectateurs Juvéniles*, in which M. Henri Storck summarises and discusses information gleaned partly through investigations in France and England, partly from answers to a detailed questionnaire.

Anyone who has been in the audience at an international programme of children's films in Bath or Edinburgh knows that the subject invites world study. Barriers between countries are only established later; at this stage there is a wide tolerance, and neither language nor colour differences seem to prevent a child from identifying himself with actors who are the right age and congenial. It looks as though there may be certain universal laws of children's entertainment. Moreover visual enjoyment is the same everywhere, so that a camera tilt in *The Mysterious Poacher* has been found to cause similar sounds of pleasure in Walham Green and Copenhagen. Where there is so much common ground, comparisons between countries are legitimate and useful; and M. Storck has produced a fine ferment of opinions.

Of all the member countries, Britain has the most systematically produced films to entertain young audiences; and the achievement of Children's Entertainment Films (Rank Organisation) has come in for discussion, sober appreciation and some sharp criticism. Occasionally in the assessment there seems to be a faint tinge of international misunderstanding and even some plain inaccuracy. As expounded by UNESCO, the C.E.F. formula appears much more cut and dried than it does in Miss Mary Field's replies to the questionnaire or in the films themselves. One has only to compare the breadth of two statements which should be identical. Answering the question: "What types of adult are liked by juvenile audiences in films made specially for them?" Miss Field writes:—

"It is impossible to make a sweeping reply to this, but there is evidence they like adults to be young, slim and attractive, or foolish and appealing. At least one British actor is, however, an exception to this rule, probably because of his sympathetic personality, and this may be true of other individual actors." Mr. Storck's interpretation is simply: "*Les personnages adultes des films, les parents notamment, doivent être sympathiques, d'allure sportive et jeune. . .*" Later in the same list of rules he says that villains have to bear conventional marks of wickedness such as dirty and ragged clothes—a statement which many of the films can refute—and adds a meditative footnote: "*Notons que c'est un trait propre à l'esprit occidental actuel d'identifier le méchant et le pauvre. . .*"

Yet, in a discussion of C.E.F.'s *The Dragon of Pendragon Castle*, he pounces on an opposite social tendency, incorrectly attributing wealth to the children of the castle and suggesting that courage has been made the prerogative of the servant's young son.

All the same, when these ground mists have been dispersed, certain formidable criticisms remain. Specialised production, M. Storck says, is allied to a questionable educational habit of solving the child's problems for him and sparing him any kind of intellectual or emotional difficulty. Efforts to shelter the young are likely to be ineffectual since nobody really knows what will harm them: and in film-making any such attempt may cause crystallisation round certain types of production. There is a danger that deliberately protective films will be made in a vacuum, in which the *Zeitgeist* has no chance of breathing. M. Storck believes that children's and adolescents' cinema should reflect the totality of life, in its brutal as well as in its peaceful aspects. On the other hand he quotes criticisms of C.E.F. by a distinguished specialist, Madame Sonika Bô, who deplores the presence of bad examples—the thefts on which the plots of certain films depend, or the unpleasant character of the second-best child dancer in *The Little Ballerina*. Thus the same films may come under fire for opposing reasons.

Films which are carefully manufactured to meet the tastes and needs of children run certain artistic risks. A cunning prescription, however expertly handled, cannot by itself ensure a satisfying work of art, "une oeuvre humaine et sensible". In many of the films seen by M. Storck and his collaborators, the formulae inspired by children's reactions seemed applied in an over-explicit way and with too clear a consciousness of cinematic effects. At this point in the argument a British criticism is brought in as reinforcement. Miss Mary C. Parnaby and Mr. Maurice T. Woodhouse, reporting on children's cinema clubs in a 1947 B.F.I. pamphlet, thought that the C.E.F. film *Jean's Plan*, although

showing a genuine appreciation of young audiences' needs and interests, left too little to the imagination. They felt that suggestion would have been more effective than the somewhat detailed exposition. As M. Storck points out, people too often forget the suggestive power of images which are the fruit of the imagination and sensibility of the creative artist.

These criticisms lead to the question: Should special films be made for children at all? Mrs. Marjorie G. Dawson, director of the Children's Film Library Committee in the United States, gives a clear-cut answer. She feels that there would be no point in specialised production for American children over eight years old. The young find themselves in a world of adults and, from about that age, they grow used to living in it; no child is an island. Most children's classics, Mrs. Dawson points out, were written for a grown-up public; and significantly one of the three writers whom UNESCO cites as the glory of children's literature is Swift. The Children's Film Library thinks it more important to discover where the tastes of all ages coincide; therefore it draws on the resources of the ordinary cinema, acquiring suitable films as they come out of commercial circulation.

Too much discussion of principles can create a false impression of impoverished uniformity. In weighing UNESCO's criticisms, one must never lose sight of the robust diversity of C.E.F.'s six-year output. There is plenty of cause for gratitude. Kindliness, tolerance, zest, a spirit of adventure and an active will for good, are brought into the field through a succession of pleasant, unaffected children, who sometimes give these qualities a strong, individual imprint. One has only to remember a recent American visitor to the Rialto, *Cinderella's Feller*, to appreciate the full value of C.E.F.'s healthy distaste for precocity.

The settings for many of the films are such as will widen and enrich the children's experience. The story of *Bush Christmas* develops spaciouly in wild Australian country. *The Mysterious Poacher* and *The Lone Climber* let the audience live for a short while among lakes, forests and mountains, with the sound of another language in their ears. Beautiful places are well photographed and lovingly explored. Some films with an English background offer an entry into unfamiliar ways of life. Thus the melodrama of *The Little Ballerina* is rooted firmly in the daily life of a ballet school, and a fleeting glimpse of Miss Margot Fonteyn in *Les Sylphides* may awaken taste for an art; while *Circus Boy* not only takes a seat in the ring but prowls about back-stage.

Perhaps one of the pleasantest things about the best C.E.F. productions is the absorbed attention to quiet detail, which even the most heavy-footed melodrama is not allowed to disturb. The sound of water dripping from an oar, bird cries, the sunlight flickering through leaves onto the Riders of the New Forest, are caught and savoured. Faithfully lingering and watching, stroking small incidents instead of jostling them out of the way, the camera examines the soil of everyday life in which the plot has been planted; so that children in the audience can feel, not only that they are courageous and clever enough to outwit a gang of thieves, but also that they are riding horses, climbing a mountain, window-cleaning or mending toys. The excitement of ordinary things, before they have been dulled by common daylight, is recognised and respected. Thus, even where the direction itself seems unimaginative, it may feed the children's imagination and give it room to breathe.

C.E.F. was not content to find something which young audiences enjoyed and then to ring changes on the first

success. Using their tastes as a starting point, it kept experimenting to see how far it could go in providing a less crude and more deeply satisfying entertainment. Thus the passion for the chase, which has introduced a set of special hunting noises and unhinged more than one cinema seat, is diverted into new channels as children on horse-back fight their way through entangling trees or boats are rowed desperately across wide expanses of water; the setting gives freshness to a jaded convention. In the same way the child audience's desire to attach itself to the winning side and share in a spectacular triumph has been harnessed to a sounder view of achievement. The heroine of *The Little Ballerina* wants to succeed because she loves her profession, in *Fortune Lane* the hero struggles against enormous odds because he has set his heart on being an engineer, and the victory in *Circus Boy* is not so much over Bailey, the rival candidate for the swimming team, as over the central character's own panic. C.E.F. always recognised that children ought to be given the best they could enjoy, and its films leave an impression of honest aspiration. Plot structure is clear and careful, with every end finished off tidily, and the technical approach is never slipshod. The aim has been, not only to ensure that the audiences spend their time in good company, but also to lay the foundations of artistic enjoyment through well-made pictures.

All these praises may outweigh, but cannot entirely answer, criticisms. Inevitably, small budgets and restrictions on the employment of child actors have left their mark on the films. C.E.F. was not able to afford the best talents money could buy, and its choice of performers was limited. This partly explains the stilted and pedestrian streak sometimes noticeable in the treatment; but it is tempting to join M. Storck and also lay a share of the blame on the over-deliberateness of specialised production. Weighty considerations pressed on the films, and sometimes they squeezed the artistry till the pips squeaked. On the one hand there was the determination—backed by a distinguished Advisory Council—to protect children's interests; on the other, a voracious public with a taste for strong meat called for its favourite food. It is not surprising that the actors sometimes seem embarrassed. Indeed the characterisation perhaps suffers more than anything else. One is aware of a sharply defined code of behaviour, an obligation to represent harmonious personal relations and good speech while remaining just the kind of person young audiences like. Since the chief parts are played by children, they have to carry the weight of the story and this often overloads them with dialogue, which they deliver like registered parcels. And the adults, knowing they are there on sufferance, tend to be uneasily ingratiating; it looks as though the children's cinema may generate a grown-up equivalent to that exile from an age-group, the infant prodigy.

Although children are said to have naturally good taste, their influence on films does not always seem happy. There is the shoddy slapstick of *Voyage of Peter Joe*, the weary recurrence of crime-and-detection plots, the genteel ham of *Trapped by the Terror*. And the careful adult influence, instead of blending, sometimes just tugs in a different direction so that—as in *Trek to Mashomba*—there are moments when intention seems to lose touch with effect. Unlike the haunting French children's films *Zanzabelle à Paris* and *Bim*, which brim over with affection for their theme and audience, the English productions seem to lack warmth and sensibility; somewhere there has been a break-



"The Lone Climber", a Children's Entertainment film made in Austria down in imagination. A nagging suspicion arises that the road from C.E.F. may lead to Mr. Samuel Goldwyn's *I Want You*.

But this is not the whole story—for after all the films were made for children, who may have their own aesthetic worlds in which adult standards are not altogether valid. As the UNESCO publication brings home, there is perhaps a need to modify techniques if young audiences are to enjoy films fully. Pace, editing, the use of close-ups, lighting, have to be adapted to a different power of response. The presentation must be lucid and energetic, and if there is too much talk and too little action the public knows how to show its disapproval. Anyone who has told children stories knows that repetition, and a fore-knowledge of the outcome, give them keen artistic pleasure; and the experience of the children's theatres, which should surely sometime be collated with that of the cinema clubs, bears out the existence of distinct and sharply pronounced technical requirements.

Then there is characterisation. Grown-up people may criticise the acting, and its direction, in C.E.F. films, contrasting *The Fallen Idol* or even *Trois Télégrammes*; but what seems most real to the children? Perceptive films about childhood are almost always—though one must except *Louisiana Story*—a contemplation of the shore from far inland. It is with the adult's wisdom, and a subtle appreciation of two worlds at cross-purposes, that the director approaches the child; thus the camera-work often emphasises the smallness and helplessness of the young. Children are more likely to identify themselves with the somewhat wooden heroes of their own films, whom the strength of their reactions can endow with life. This is perhaps where one finds the answer to the charge of over-explicitness. Give a young audience bold, crude outlines, and it may supply the overtones. Childhood is very difficult to remember, but some people may recall times when a photograph or the commonplace pattern on a curtain seemed to hold an infinity of suggestion. And Stevenson felt he had learned the very spirit of his life's enjoyment out of the cut-and-dry art of the toy theatres, which delighted him as a boy.

Ideally, then, should children of the Saturday morning age-groups be entertained by films which deliberately serve

(continued on page 185)

Book Reviews

MAKING A FILM, The Story of *Secret People*, by Lindsay Anderson. With the script of Thorold Dickinson's film. Illustrated. (George Allen & Unwin, 17/6d.)

Reviewed by Frank Hauser

There have been many books about the making of films. The subject is deceptively attractive—the mysteries of sound and lighting, the baffling jargon of scripts, the fragmentation of the work itself, the conflicting personalities of the studio, all appealing to our layman's sense of awe at a process which bears so little apparent relation to entering figures in a ledger or teaching small boys to conjugate irregular verbs. Lindsay Anderson's is the first of its kind I have read to make the whole matter, if not clear (it would take a Gibbon to account for some of the confusion that seems to be inherent in the film world), at any rate comprehensible. His book is a diary of a film. In some respects it is like Cocteau's diary of *La Belle et la Bête* but whereas the fascination of the French work lies in the workings of the film-maker's mind as he comes up against the innumerable disasters and triumphs of his own creation, *Making a Film* lets the reader do his own worrying and triumphing as problems loom up and are solved. Actors gulp nerve tonics, actresses disappear in floods of tears, props turn recalcitrant, visiting authors drop mild clangers, and throughout runs an underlying refrain, familiar from the army, and voiced in this case by one of the sound recordists: "If you ran a business firm like a film studio . . ." The stakes are high, no doubt: success means big money in the bank, and more chances to use one's talents in a small and shrinking area. But what emerges from the book is not the Front Office, not the Hollywood of Hortense Powdermaker; with its illiterate bosses and slave-driven artists, but absorption in a task long meditated and now being carried out by craftsmen who know and love their work. In an odd way, this diary is an apologia for the British film industry. The sound recordist is quite right, as even the most casual visitor to any film set can see: but balancing his attitude is that of Thorold Dickinson saying: "It's terribly difficult to direct a film you don't want to make. Almost impossible. This one comes here—from the guts."

Perhaps the most valuable section of the book is the first, which deals with the preliminaries, the work that goes on before a single camera has turned. As in any other form of corporate creativeness, the groundwork is everything: a good director, working with a good team of technicians and actors, will produce good results, other things being equal. It is not a question of luck, but of the "other things": the degree of accord which has been reached by all concerned, the rightness of the script both in detail and in broad sweep, the availability of the most suitable people for the various jobs. Above all, in films, there is the minute and extensive planning which has to go on if the company is to be able to function at all: second thoughts are expensive, third thoughts almost impossible: the initial plan must be accurate and good. I think the book would have been even better in this part had the author been able to give us more about the script before it reached its final, or almost final, form, more about the reasons that lay behind the alteration in Maria's age and Mr. Brent's transformation into Anselmo, to take two obvious examples. Since we are not being given a general disquisition on film-making but an account of a specific film being made, the reader is more inclined to ask "Why?" than Mr. Anderson allows for: particularly as publication coincided with the presentation of the finished work, so that the reader may be assumed to have seen *Secret People* for himself, and formed his own conclusions about its weaknesses and virtues.

But this is the only fault I can urge against the book (apart from the type, which hardly reflects credit on the publishers who ask so high a price for their ware). It seems hardly necessary to say that, as a record of the creative processes that went to make a particular film, it stands clearly on its own merits. As for the individual characters described, one gets to know and like or dislike them with surprising clarity. Whether the British film industry ought to be run this way, whether the producer has too much or too little power, whether technicians are long-suffering or obstructive, whether actors are human beings . . . the book gives the reader all the data he needs to answer these questions: and, as one had expected from his record on *Sequence*, Mr. Anderson writes in a style which is neither gossip-column nor text-book, but straight, clean, likeable English.

SHOTS IN THE DARK, Edited by Edgar Anstey, Ernest Lindgren, Roger Manvell and Paul Rotha, assisted by Gitta Blumenthal. (Allan Wingate, 13s. 6d.)

Reviewed by Robert Hamer

I must, in honesty, confess that when *SIGHT AND SOUND* asked me to animadvert on this compilation, my immediate reaction was one of pleasurable anticipation of getting a bit of my own back, of having the chance to match the quotidian or hebdomadary witticisms of the ladies and gentlemen compiled.

Not that any one of the gentlemen or ladies, with one possible exception, have been to me unfairer than I deserve. But it is never easily acceptable to have your labour of love dismissed with a shrug, be this done in five lines or two columns.

Maturer reflection persuaded me that this type of attempted revenge would be nugatory. There is, in boxing parlance, a process known as "leading with your chin". To a comparable process we makers of films are in the nature of things condemned. The product of twelve or fifteen months' work is exhibited one morning in a cinema redolent of last night's cigarettes to a group of characters who rarely manage to achieve either punctuality or silence.

So now, the critical faculty have led with their collective chin and, mixing anatomical metaphors, one can do no other than turn the other cheek.

My main grumble against the better class critics has always been their failure to give you credit for good intentions, their inability—or refusal—to understand the economic fundamentals of the art-industry. Now they have come out into public print with the admission—or excuse—that they are subject to the same political and economic stresses as we. So we forgive them, for we do at last know what they do and why they have to do it.

There would not be much point in discussing the main text of the volume. It is surely no ground for applause that someone is capable of recognising a good film when he sees it.

It might be more profitable to contemplate the Preface, in which I think I discern a hitherto unknown but, I think, alarming tendency to set up criticism as a "thing in itself" apart from the "thing criticised".

Quotation, like compromise, is the grave of the soul, but what was good enough for Webster and Marvell should satisfy us—"We have therefore made our choice on the principle that those films should be included which have elicited the most interesting critical writing irrespective of their quality as films." Or, if one may indulge in pastiche, Miss X might have remarked: "The expense of shame in a waste of spirit."

One awaits with interest the companion volumes from Paris and New York.

COMPOSING FOR THE FILMS by Hanns Eisler. (Dennis Dobson, 12s. 6d.)

Reviewed by Antony Hopkins

This book, which is the first that I know of to attempt to promote a serious study of the aesthetics of film music, is unfortunately not as successful as it might have been. For one thing, it is written in the most incredibly heavy-going and professorial jargon which makes the reader's task a constant self-discipline as he drags his eyes back over sentence after sentence; for another, a great number of the allegations the author makes about musical practices in Hollywood do not apply over here. That he substantiates many of the suspicions that musicians in Europe have had about American film music is at any rate gratifying; but even so, we are left in the dark about many things which we might have expected to find in such a book.

The book is divided into three sections, with an appendix which is in fact far the most interesting part. The first section throws out a number of suggestions about current conventions in the average film score, discusses prejudices and clichés, and analyses several examples from films, although without the help of music-type illustrations. The second part, which is far the most difficult to read, attempts to formulate some sort of musical aesthetic for the films. I cannot say that I was very impressed with this; the constant pleas for the Schonberg school of composition, and the categorical statements—by no means unarguable—on which so many of the writer's theories are based have a wearying effect on the reader. There are, of course, a lot of shrewd remarks, and many constructive ideas; but the total effect is of someone striving to elevate every film score to the level of an I.S.C.M. work, while failing to recognise the fundamentally *inartistic* nature of most

films. Nor does he ever mention the very real danger (of which I have spoken on previous occasions in *SIGHT AND SOUND*) of film music, which is essentially transient and subsidiary, encroaching on the world of concert music to such an extent that it ultimately robs the serious composer of much of the musical material that should by rights be his.

The third part is devoted to an assessment of the more practical problems of writing film music. Again there are many statements that one must disagree with—for example, that “the motion picture requires *prima facie* no specific technique of composing”. I can think of quite a few composers who would be far from happy at having to write music to the nearest third of a second. His remarks on the composition of the Hollywood orchestras are interesting, but again do not apply here. So far as I know, no English composer has ever had to consider any but financial limitations when he has had to decide on the composition of an orchestra for a film. One is certainly not told to score the music for such and such a combination of instruments, nor would anyone question one's right to choose an experimental group if one was able to supply all the musical requirements of the picture with it. Nor are we to any great extent tied to the system of arrangers.

It is when we get to the appendix that the book really comes to life. In it, we find a description of the work done by the Film Music Project of the New School for Social Research. I would recommend this section to the notice of all film directors, for it might do much to renovate their ideas about the possible functions of film music. It also includes the score of a sequence written to film by Eisler, one of *Fourteen Ways to Describe Rain*; this example prompts me to ask one question of Mr. Eisler. He knows and I know that this is a lot better as music than the average American score, though I will be frank and say that it is not the sort of thing that appeals to me greatly; it satisfies his concept of what should happen in a film score, but what would ninety-nine per cent. of the directors and even more producers say when they heard it? He who pays the piper calls the tune; and let us face it, the films whose pictorial qualities deserve musical treatment of this quality are few and far between. On the whole, I feel that films get much the sort of music they deserve; the good ones get the best scores, the bad ones get the mush. Though this book certainly had to be written, and even more so had to be published—and I congratulate Dobson's for taking on something that will scarcely be a best seller—I wonder how much service Mr. Eisler is doing to his art in commending with such fervour Good Scores For Bad Films.

WITH PICTURES

A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF THE MOVIES by Deems Taylor, Bryant Hale and Marceline Peterson (Allen & Unwin, 25s.) trades heavily on the intrinsic fascination of picture books of the cinema. It is not a history of the movies, but a collection of about 695 stills from American films and 5 from British and Italian. The text is little more than an extended publicity blurb, reflecting the confusion of values shown in the illustrations. (Sample omissions: *The Magnificent Ambersons*, all Sturges except *Great McGinty*, *The Maltese Falcon*, *You Only Live Once*, all Ford from *Expensive* onwards, *A Walk in the Sun*. Sample inclusions: *G.W.T.W.*, *The Little Colonel*, *Going My Way*, *Pride of the Yankees*, *Anna and the King of Siam*.) Films awarded the distinction of a full-page still to themselves include *The Good Earth*, *Little Women* (1), *The Jolson Story*, *Hamlet*, *Three Smart Girls*. The text is slipshod, sometimes listing directors, sometimes producers, with no apparent system; it is not always accurate (e.g. *Pygmalion*—“the first Shaw play ever screened”) and not often illuminating. “The movie fan of to-day will accept far sterner fare than the tales of the silent days. For instance, the screen adaptation of Joseph Conrad's *Victory* . . .” The stills are not too well reproduced.

CINEMA 1952 edited by Roger Manvell and R. K. Neilson Baxter (Penguin, 3/6) is the third of the annual Penguin miscellanies and probably the best. Particularly good features are the extracts from the shooting scripts of *The Third Man*, *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, *Secret People*, *Lavender Hill Mob*, *Chance of a Lifetime*, *Great Expectations*, introduced by their makers; and Flaherty's wonderful tale of Comock the Eskimo. Karel Reisz writes interestingly on the novel and the cinema: Eisenstein's *The Twelve Apostles* is a personal account of the making of *Potemkin*; and there is a debate on film criticism between Roger Manvell, Gavin Lambert and Jack Beddington. News and pictures are well selected, though unfortunately the stills suffer from poor reproduction.

PERIODICALS. Recent issues of *Cahiers du Cinema* (obtainable in Britain from Anglo-French Literary Services, 27, Charlotte Street, W.1) have contained some really outstanding features. The December, 1951, issue had material on Bunuel of great interest, and a fine review of *Los Olvidados* by Jacques Doniol-Valcroze. About half of the January, 1952, issue was devoted to Renoir, with a fascinating interview (Doniol-Valcroze), an estimation of *The River* by Dudley Nichols, and a penetrating analysis of Renoir's work in France by André Bazin. Other recent features have included an article on von Sternberg by Curtis Harrington, Jean Queval on Norman MacLaren, and a synopsis for a film by Zavattini, as well as many excellent reviews of current films and first-rate illustrations.

The *American Films in Review*, edited by Henry Hart (published by the National Board of Review, 31, Union Square, New York 3), a pocket-size monthly, is less specialised. It has not yet attained a uniformly high standard, and in its estimable attempt at a popular approach sometimes descends to triviality. But recent issues have contained some interesting and valuable things, including a well illustrated survey of Garbo by Theodore Huff, an article on Film Style by Dreyer, an analysis of *Rashomon* by Henry Hart, Herman Weinberg's interview with Richter, and a symposium on *Streetcar Named Desire*.

The *Italian Cinema* (Milano, Via Serio 1) is an admirable monthly that combines seriousness with restrained popular appeal in the way *L'Ecran Francais* used to a few years ago. It is both topical and analytical, and a recent innovation is a “Film Index” published each month, the first being on Mario Camerini, fully and readably presented.

THE SOUND TRACK

In a film so typical of elements that its production company claims are needed to “add something permanent to the cultural treasure-house of civilisation”, it is not surprising that the music tracks for *Quo Vadis* abound in heavenly choirs, mushy orchestrations and shattering trumpets. It is not generally known that the whole of the music for this film was recorded at Elstree Studios, with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the B.B.C. Choir. Miklos Rozsa, the composer, worked here for many years and wrote the music for such films as *South Riding*, *The Divorce of Lady X* and *The Four Feathers*; he came to this country again to record his latest score, and his assistant was Marcus Dods, now chorus master at Sadlers Wells theatre. J. B. Smith and Ted Drake were responsible for the balance and recording, under the supervision of A. W. Watkins.

Seven scenes are represented on two records (M.G.M. 460-61), taken direct from the sound track. The *Prelude* starts with a furious brass fanfare, and is followed almost at once by the choir singing “Quo Vadis, Domine?” which, conveniently, is translated and serves as a kind of English-Latin counterpoint. After some development, the orchestra takes up a few bars of a heavy rhythmic accompaniment, leading into the first scenes of Roman soldiers on the march. *Syrian Dance* begins with a wistful melody on *cor anglais*, then taken up by the flute with an intriguing percussion accompaniment. It has some interesting examples of pseudo-period atmosphere in the resultant orchestration and, like other sections of the film, cannot resist a crescendo finale. *Siciliana Antique* is perhaps the most interesting item, dominated by drum rhythms, sudden cymbal crashes and an ingenious use of bagpipes which are employed to create an impression of martial music of the Roman era. *Hymn of the Vestal Virgins* is a screaming, over-played piece of bombastic nonsense.

The scene of *Petronius' Meditation and Death* gives us Rozsa in melodic mood, as distinct from the Romanesque of the other extracts. An Elgar-ish dignity is suggested by the opening string theme, but over-orchestration soon destroys the mood. *Miracle and Finale* are a matter of reducing the volume and standing well back: the heavenly choir to end (one hopes) all heavenly choirs. The beginning is a pleasant melody for strings and wordless voices, interspersed with woodwind and brass phrases. An attractive *cor anglais* setting picks up the theme, and the choir enters, chanting and singing the original “Quo Vadis, Domine?” phrase of the *Prelude*. Suddenly the jubilant voices are hushed as they recite “I am the Way, the Truth and the Light . . .” whereupon the full force of over 200 voices, full orchestra, peals of bells, chants of “Hallelujah!” and double forte brass fanfares is unleashed to bring the recording to an overwhelming conclusion.

JOHN HUNTLEY.

CORRESPONDENCE

(THE LIVING STORY continued from page 179)

which was the backbone of the service; and, amongst others, the Ministries of Health and Agriculture have shown how effectively it could promote departmental policy.

Had the extinction of Crown been the only radical change, the framework of the film information services would still have been preserved. As it is, they have been reduced from an active to a passive instrument, and although the Central Film Library will continue to operate, no longer as a free service (a development which many people have long considered inevitable), the power to take films to audiences, to stimulate local interest—the power, in fact, to take the initiative at all—has gone.

No doubt the Government took this decision after full consideration of the consequences. How can the gap be filled? Perhaps we can learn something from the Canadian Film Board, which has achieved its non-theatrical distribution through regional councils. The schoolteachers, the factory manager, the priest, the doctor, the housewife, work together and through their committee control library and distribution services which penetrate the remotest needs of the people. To set up a similar system in Britain, with its already complex structure of functional and recreational groups, would be a long and difficult task, though the Scottish Film Council has solved the problem brilliantly and a start has been made in Manchester by the Film Council of the North West.

As for production, there is no doubt that John Grierson's suggestions on *The Front Page* have much to commend them. I hope it will be possible too for the British Film Institute to sharpen the experimental edge of the film industry which, in the tradition of Len Lye, Cavalcanti and Norman McLaren, has often been associated with documentary achievements in the past. For this purpose the Institute would rely upon the generosity of the British Film Production Fund.

A few misconceptions concerning Crown remain to be cleared up. Charges of extravagance have been made, by Grierson among others, and if these imply that the Government machine was costly to operate and involved high overheads, there are grounds for criticism; but if they imply that the film makers themselves were indifferent to economy, they are unjust. Published figures show that a straightforward documentary produced by Crown may have cost between £3 and £4 a foot; although this may be higher than comparable figures from outside, it is enough to dispose of the wilder stories of lavish expenditure. It must always be remembered, too, that as well as the overheads of a unit equipped with a studio and resources to produce films at something like twice its recent output, there has to be added another overhead—that of the C.O.I. Films Division. There is little doubt, at any rate in recent years, so far as direct costs were concerned, that budgets at Crown were scrupulously drawn up and films produced efficiently and simply.

There has, too, been a tendency to rate the success of Crown by the extent to which its films achieved theatrical distribution particularly in relation to the revenue earned. This of course is a false basis, for the sponsor makes a film not as a commercial venture in production but as part of his informational programme. A single example can clarify the point. The Home Office recently sponsored a film, *A Family Affair*, which appealed for foster parents for homeless children, of whom there are now some 20,000, each costing the Exchequer from £2 to £6 a week in maintenance. After a few weeks, at least 300 requests directly traceable to the showing of the film were received from prospective foster parents; even if half of these requests were accepted, one can estimate that at least £25,000 was saved by the Exchequer. As a commercial proposition, no doubt the project showed a loss of two or three thousand pounds.

Nothing that John Grierson says is truer than his statement that techniques cannot provide the secret of creative work. Recently Crown has not been encouraged to exhort or to inspire, but rather to execute simple, straightforward film jobs. This task has been carried out with care and craftsmanship. It would be sad indeed if documentary were to lose the genial and understanding leadership of Ralph Nunn May, Margaret Thompson's precious talent in the handling of children and young people, the enthusiasm and instructional skill of Richard Warren, Ken Cameron's unique experience as sound director and Terry Trench's authority in the cutting room. To these and to the many others who have worked with them under the anonymous identity of Crown, we wish the best of luck.

The Sulky Fire

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

Sir,—In this article on Documentary, Brian Smith has, surely, wandered off the track, or rather, he seems to have taken the first few steps along a new and quite distinct tract.

The old hands of Documentary would probably define the documentary approach as being an attempt to explain the workings of our complex world by using the most powerful and direct methods at hand, and this would include the use of instruments ranging from the radio, to Norman McLaren's mobile posters in China. The present quandary arises from a lack of creative effort in a movement that could still inspire, but instead of being new and exciting, has become generally accepted and respected.

The solution proposed by Mr. Smith of taking a "new boat" is valid only if we can agree that documentary has run its course and has achieved what it set out to do, and there are few who would accept this verdict. I do not accept it myself and feel that the right approach to the problem is contained in Basil Wright's proposals which are, in brief, less control over the film maker, and an attack on complacency.

However, I would be the last to deny the need for a New Outlook for films deriving its inspiration from humanism, but it is the feature studios which are in need of a change of heart, and incidentally, the film Mr. Smith himself chooses (*Chance of a Lifetime*), as an example of a changing outlook, was designed to be exhibited as a first feature. Many better tragedies and comedies could be built on the humanist theme of the value of the individual and his relation to the community. Perhaps Rotha's film *No Resting Place* and Lindtberg's *Four in a Jeep* provide further pointers to the emergence of a "humanist movement". We cannot yet tell if this will recur, but let us do what we may to encourage it.

Yours faithfully,
A. W. JOHNSON.

6, New Square, Cambridge.

BRIAN SMITH writes: "The old hands might say they were 'explaining': their films say they were trying to help bring about changes. I think it broadly true that the changes for which they had sympathy in the 30's, occurred in the 40's, and to this extent the course has been run. The new course will be determined by the new sympathies—for humanism, or for what?"

"I quoted *Chance of a Lifetime* because it demonstrates some aspects of a humanist culture, in a helpful way. *No Resting Place* is surely less helpful? In it, the autocrat succeeds and the humanists fail. The moral, that vengeance is evil, makes stronger impact than the moral that autocracy is evil. There is little indication of the means by which the tragedy could have been averted. Artistically, this is irrelevant comment about a very moving film; in terms of documentary, though, it is fundamental.

"There has never been fully scientific examination of all the factors involved in the creation of a film. Lacking knowledge, therefore, I accept that good film art may be mainly a matter of individual caprice; but I believe nothing of the kind, and 'complacency' does not seem to me a correct diagnosis of the present condition of affairs."

Quo Vadis and the Press

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

Sir,—As a lover of animals, may I crave the hospitality of your columns to express my horror at the mauling of the M.G.M. lion by two Christian damsels.

The fact that the spectacle was timed to take place on the Sabbath would add, were that possible, to its impropriety.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
"LEOPHILUS"

Lessons from Italy

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

Sir,—Strong economic reasons oblige most European governments to take a serious interest in their national film industries.

Domestically, they benefit from the substantial revenues provided by entertainments taxes and by customs duties or levies on the import of films. In the international field, they must protect their economies against the transfer of profits to the United States—a problem which admits only of temporary compromises. In Britain we have the amended Eady Plan to ensure that part of the heavy taxation is returned to the industry. The Anglo-American Film Agreement compromises with the problem of the earnings of United States companies and incidentally gives some protection to our own industry.

Difficulties are seen in their immediate, economic contexts and the measures taken to deal with them are purely economic. The film industry is regarded as something analogous to the goose that lays the golden eggs. It must be kept in production; a system of priorities must be applied to its output; it must not be discouraged. That it should continue to be a goose appears to cause no official concern.

Surely there is a point here which calls for imaginative handling? "Movies", as Dr. Powdermaker puts it, "are both big business and popular art with widely differing goals and values." The pursuit of one set of goals and values at the expense of the other produces a situation which tends to stifle art and to frustrate the creative forces of the medium. It results, too, in an unnecessarily low cultural status for a medium of such power.

This problem can be attacked in two ways. The educational approach is given lip-service and inadequate financial backing, yet it continues to develop through the work of film societies and other voluntary organisations. The complementary approach, that of providing incentives which will lead to the raising of quality in the industry itself, has been virtually ignored.

The dominance of the front office must be recognised—and used—in any realistic attempt to modify the film industry. The reformer must talk the language that is understood—box office.

Italy has already given us an example of the kind of imaginative legislation which is needed for this second approach. The responsibilities of the Government in its relations with the cinema are considered in their wider, social and cultural contexts. The law is framed to satisfy three equally important needs: the prosperity of the industry, the development of the film as an art and the unhindered international circulation of the best films irrespective of their sources. Without neglecting the economic aspects, it is designed progressively to raise the artistic standards of Italian films by providing incentives in the form of grants based upon guaranteed percentages of the takings.

Under the 1949 law, the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers is not only responsible for legislation in connection with national film production and relations with other national film industries, it is also charged with the improvement of film production and distribution at home and abroad. In practice, this responsibility is discharged by a consultative committee headed by the Under-Secretary of State and comprising the Director-General of Entertainment, a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Trade, a film journalist and six representatives of the industry (an employer and an employee from the production, distribution and exhibition sides).

To qualify for protection under the quota regulations and to benefit from the incentive scheme, a film must first earn recognition as a national—i.e. Italian—film. So it is submitted to a Technical Committee broadly representative of all branches of the industry and including an expert on artistic matters jointly appointed by the Presidency and the Ministry of Public Education. There is a duplicate Committee of Appeal to reconsider disputed decisions. The Technical Committee may reject a film as being below the normal standard of technical and artistic achievement, in which case it is denied "Italian parentage". Films so rejected are treated on the same terms as imported films: they do not count for quota purposes and they receive no State-grant.

The regulations require at least twenty days in each season to be devoted to national feature films; for six months of the year the programme must include one national short and—not necessarily during the same six months—one national newsreel. Under these conditions, a rejected film stands little chance of survival against the overwhelming competition of dubbed American productions.

Films accepted by the Technical Committee are admitted into the protected category for quota purposes and qualify for a State grant. A feature receives a grant equal to 10 per cent. of the gross takings over five years, while the 3 per cent. grants for shorts and newsreels are based on the gross takings for three years and five months respectively. These percentages are increased to 18 per cent.—and 5 per cent.—for films considered to show

outstanding artistic and technical merit. The grants are raised from Entertainments Tax revenues, and tax varying from 30 per cent. to 50 per cent. according to the price of the seat. It is interesting to note that 1 per cent. of this revenue is set aside to assist enterprises (including private societies) concerned with research, study, experiment or the training of new technicians and artists.

The quality of a proposed production is also considered in deciding loans which may be made to finance it. Up to 60 per cent. of the production costs can be allowed at low interest rates from a fund which derives from the levy of 2½ million lire on imported dubbed features.

This legislation is not entirely new, for its present form is really a more discriminating development of laws made in 1945 and 1947. According to the UNESCO Technical Needs Survey (1948) these earlier laws did not have altogether the desired practical effect of encouraging quality production. Commenting on the fact that conditions seemed ideal for the development of the neo-realistic movement, the report pointed out that the directors mainly responsible for the prestige of Italian films abroad were having difficulty in finding producers willing to accept their ideas. This, however, was over three years ago and the position seems to have improved since then.

The official attitude to-day is more satisfied. Feature production has almost doubled since 1947, as has the percentage of the total takings made by national films. National short films increased from 185 in 1947 to 281 in 1949 and 506 in 1951. This last figure includes 231 films which qualified for the higher 5 per cent. grant. Export totals have also shown a significant increase.

In artistic and cultural matters it is usually necessary for legislation to be in advance of public opinion—it is equally important that there should be a vociferous minority exerting pressure on the legislature. Profiting annually by some £30 million from the cinema, the Exchequer must accept a share of social responsibility for it. But to translate this into practical action, the Government will have to be persuaded. The Italian scheme provides one example and there are precedents in our own treatment of the other arts—why not, for instance, exemption from entertainments tax for outstanding productions? The goose is ready for emancipation.

Yours faithfully,
ALLAN BORSELL.

15, Earsdon Road,
Houghton-le-Spring, Co. Durham.

(CHILDREN'S FILMS) (continued from page 181.)

their unformed tastes, or is it more important to show them selections from the best which the cinema as a whole can produce? M. Storck wisely points to the possibility of combining the two, thus allowing young audiences a fuller emotional and aesthetic experience than the enclosed world of specialised production can offer by itself. This would mean that children, while saved from the perpetual dazing contact with films outside the range of their understanding, would not have to do all their swimming in the shallow end. The systematic use of good adult material in club entertainment must of course have disturbing effects on programme building, since children's story films are much shorter and thus leave room for varied supports. Also it should be remembered that the actual composition of an audience vitally affects the response; as Mrs. Dawson points out, and actors from the late Young Vic company would confirm, children with their parents can appreciate much which seems out of their range when they are on their own. Britain's uncompromisingly juvenile audiences may reject some perfectly good family entertainment. But these difficulties should not deter experiment. As for specialised production, it is good to know that Miss Mary Field's admirable work is continuing in Children's Film Foundation Ltd., and one hopes she will have the chance to call on directors who, besides talent, have the immense love and knowledge of children which M. Storck rightly lists among essential qualifications.

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